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# Late German Idealism

*Trendelenburg & Lotze*

FREDERICK C. BEISER



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UNIVERSITY PRESS

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*In memoriam:*

*Anton, Augustus, Andreas and Nickolaus Beiser, who all fell at  
CHICKAMAUGA, SEPTEMBER 19-20, 1863.*

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# Preface

Recent studies of the history of German philosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries keep stumbling against two neglected figures: Hermann Lotze and Adolf Trendelenburg. Though their importance and influence has been generally recognized, little work has been done on them in the past half century. The aim of the present book is to rectify this deficiency and to give the Anglophone reader a general introduction to the life and philosophy of two of the most important and neglected philosophers of the nineteenth century. My ultimate hope is that this work will set the general context for a future study of these philosophers and their legacy.

This study is part of a more general effort to broaden our horizons in the study of German idealism. Hitherto these horizons have been narrowly and tendentiously defined by Hegel, who saw the idealist tradition as a movement beginning with Kant, proceeding through Fichte and Schelling, and then culminating in himself. Since most scholars have accepted the Hegelian definition, they have not only ignored idealism after Hegel, but they have also neglected competing movements within the idealist tradition. While the present book considers idealism after Hegel, and while a previous book (*German Idealism*, Harvard 2002) treated the role of the early romantics within the idealist tradition, a future work will examine the psychologistic tradition of Fries, Herbart and Beneke, which was the competing idealist movement to that of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel.

This book can be at best only the beginning of a study of the Lotze-Trendelenburg legacy. These two late idealists were an important influence on most of the leading philosophers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While in some cases I have tried to indicate what that influence might be, I have not been able to investigate it in any detail. Exactly what influence Trendelenburg and Lotze had on particular figures is the subject for more specific studies which I cannot pursue in a general introduction. I have had little to say, therefore, about Trendelenburg's influence on Dilthey, Brentano, and Kierkegaard, about Lotze's influence on Husserl and neo-Kantianism, and about the fraught question of Lotze's influence on Frege.

As a recent guest at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, Canada, I had the opportunity to examine Winthrop Pickard Bell's manuscript notes on Husserl's 1912 lectures on Lotze's logic. Though these notes make clear Lotze's importance for Husserl, I have not, because of the general constraints of this work, been able to make use of them.

The study of Lotze and Trendelenburg is very much in its infancy. Apart from a few monographs and dissertations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, little has been written about them. Recently, though, there have been promising signs of



a revival. In the case of Trendelenburg, there has been the important chapter devoted to him in Klaus Christian Köhnke's *Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), 23–57, and the new anthology of essays edited by Köhnke and Gerhard Hartung, *Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburgs Wirkung* (Eutin: Eutiner Landesbibliothek, 2006). In the case of Lotze, a great step forward was made in 2003 with the publication of Reinhard Pester's collection of letters and documents, *Hermann Lotze, Briefe und Dokumente* (Würzburg, Königshausen und Neumann). This work, and Pester's own monograph (*Hermann Lotze*, Königshausen und Neumann, 1997), has set the foundation for future Lotze research. My own work, as should be apparent from its many footnotes, is greatly indebted to all these studies.

Working on Trendelenburg and Lotze has been a rewarding but also lonely task. I am grateful for the encouragement of several individuals: Michael Morgan, Daniel Dahlstrom, Reinier Munk, Sebastian Luft, Kris McDaniel, Allen Wood, and Jason Bell.

Syracuse, New York  
September 2012

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# Introduction: Idealism After Hegel

## 1. Refiguring Idealism

It is a commonplace of the history of philosophy that German idealism came to an end with Hegel's death in 1831. That tradition supposedly lasted some fifty years, having begun with Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* in 1781. After Hegel, so the story goes, philosophy in Germany had to adapt to a new scientific and industrial age, so that it became more political and realistic, even materialist. Already by the 1840s, idealism began to seem a quaint echo from the past, the philosophy of a bygone age. If the idealist tradition continued at all, it was in England or the U.S.—in the works of Bradley, Bosanquet, McTaggart, and Royce—but not in Germany, its birthplace. If the owl of Minerva was hatched on the Neckar, she roosted on the Thames.

Although deeply entrenched, this commonplace is just false. It ignores one plain but too little recognized fact: the persistence of the idealist tradition in Germany long after Hegel's death. It was continued not only by minor figures in very obscure places, but by major figures in very prominent ones. Indeed, the two most influential philosophers in Germany in the half-century after 1831 self-consciously placed themselves in the idealist tradition. These philosophers were Adolf Trendelenburg (1802–1872) and Hermann Lotze (1816–1881). Both held chairs at prestigious universities for nearly a half century: Trendelenburg in Berlin from 1833 to 1872, Lotze in Göttingen from 1844 to 1881. Both had an immense influence. Almost every leading philosopher in Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—Wilhelm Windelband, Hermann Cohen, Wilhelm Dilthey, Gottlob Frege, Franz Brentano, Heinrich Rickert, and Edmund Husserl—had been students of Trendelenburg or Lotze. If we take these basic facts into account, then we have to revise drastically our periodization of German idealism. We have to extend it by a full fifty years! In that case, the idealist tradition in Germany came to an end not with cholera in 1831 but with a cold in 1881.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> If one counts neo-Kantianism, the tradition does not even end with Lotze. It goes on until Ernst Cassirer's death in 1945. German idealism should be periodized into three phases: the classical phase from Kant to Hegel (1781–1831); the late or mature phase, whose chief representatives are Lotze and Trendelenburg (1831–1881); and the final neo-Kantian phase (1881–1945), which includes Hermann Cohen (1842–1918), Wilhelm Windelband (1848–1915), Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936), Paul Natorp (1854–1924), Emil Lask (1875–1915), and Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945). These figures hardly exhaust German idealism. Lotze and Trendelenburg were by no means the only figures in the middle or mature phase, which also includes Christian Hermann Weiße (1801–1866), Immanuel Hermann Fichte (1797–1879), and Heinrich Moritz Chalybäus (1796–1862). And besides the rationalist-speculative tradition of the first phase (Fichte-Schelling-Hegel), there was also an empiricist-psychological tradition, whose main representatives were Jakob Fries (1773–1843), Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841), and Friedrich

Despite their great influence, Trendelenburg and Lotze were quickly forgotten after their deaths. The reasons for their rapid oblivion are various. Having strongly encouraged their students to think for themselves, neither formed a school nor had disciples. Their influence therefore came not wholesale—in a complete doctrine or closed system—but piecemeal—in many scattered suggestions and disparate ideas. Their legacy also rested heavily on their example: on how to read a text carefully, on how to think through a problem thoroughly, on how to write and reason clearly. But the effect of example does not last far beyond the generation who witnesses it. The explosion of philosophical movements in Germany after 1880—the rise of Marxism, logical positivism, phenomenology, neo-Kantianism, existentialism, *Lebensphilosophie*—also eclipsed all that preceded them.

Though quickly forgotten, Trendelenburg and Lotze still had an enduring influence. The main reason for their lasting legacy is that they were sources of resistance against the growing intellectual forces of their age: historicism, naturalism, positivism, and materialism. They served as a reminder to the next generation that there is an alternative to these doctrines, that there was once a glorious tradition that stood against them. For whoever could not accept psychologism in logic, mechanism in biology, materialism in psychology, or relativism in history, Trendelenburg and Lotze had something important to say. Some of the most familiar concepts used in debates today about the limits of psychologism, naturalism, and materialism—hermeneutics, intentionality, and normativity—have their ultimate sources in Trendelenburg and Lotze. It was no accident that the fathers of these concepts—Dilthey, Brentano, and Windelband—had been their students. The belief in an eternal “third realm” of value and validity, which was so important for Cohen, Husserl, and Rickert, also has its origins in these late idealists.

## 2. Preserving and Reforming a Tradition

That Trendelenburg and Lotze belong in the idealist tradition should not be a matter of any doubt. This is not simply a question of nomenclature or verbal gerrymandering. For both expressly conceived themselves as spokesmen for the idealist tradition, as heirs of a legacy which went back to Leibniz and Kant, and which was carried forward by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Their main ambitions were to preserve this legacy, to sustain it in their more positivist, utilitarian, and materialistic age.

Trendelenburg and Lotze were loyal to the basic metaphysical doctrines of the idealist tradition. They were eager to uphold “the organic view of the world”, according to which nature forms a living purposive whole. No less than Schelling and Hegel, they reacted against the mechanistic view of the world, which would

reduce it down to a mere machine. They also subscribed to Schelling's and Hegel's "objective idealism", according to which reality is a manifestation or embodiment of the ideal.

Our late idealists were also staunch defenders of the basic intellectual values of the idealist tradition: the integrity of the ideal, the need for a holistic view of the world, the importance of thinking for oneself in religion, science, and politics. All these values, they felt, were under siege by new political, economic, and intellectual forces. The rise of materialism had undermined the integrity of the ideal, threatening to make it an epiphenomenon of matter; the growing specialization of the sciences seemed to make a holistic view of the world an unrealistic prospect; and the new political movements—socialism, nationalism, and liberalism—demanded intellectual submission to party dogmas.

They were no less guardians of the moral and social ideals of the idealist tradition: the self-realization of the individual, the development of all its powers into a harmonious whole; the integration of the citizen into the community; and a sense of oneness with nature, so that the self felt "at home" again in its world. These ideals too were imperilled by modern forces, by the increasing mechanization and atomization of society, which had divided the individual within itself, and from others and nature as a whole. In striving to uphold these holistic values against the divisive forces of the age, Trendelenburg and Lotze revealed themselves to be late romantics. They were late nineteenth-century heirs of the great Romantic Movement begun in Weimar and Jena in the late 1790s.

As much as Lotze and Trendelenburg wanted to preserve the idealist tradition, they were also intent on reforming it. They were convinced that it could survive only if it were revised and adapted to the new challenges of a more scientific age. The main problem with the tradition—the chief reason it remained alienated from the new scientific mentality—lay with its faulty methodology. That method consisted in its foundationalist program and its faith in *a priori* reasoning. Fichte's *a priori* deductions, Schelling's method of construction, and Hegel's dialectic had become suspect in their eyes, chiefly because they attempted to reach substantive conclusions from abstract premises. Rather than examining particular facts for their own sake, they made them conform to some *a priori* conceptual scheme. Such methods were completely alien to the methods of the new empirical sciences, which were more inductive, hypothetical, and tentative. So, in reaction to the old idealist methods, Trendelenburg and Lotze strived to reorient philosophy around the empirical sciences. They wanted philosophy to respect the inductive and hypothetical procedures of these sciences, to take into account the results of the latest empirical research. Philosophy should no longer attempt to lead the sciences, prescribing their first principles, but it should follow them, deriving its principles from them. Philosophy had to learn to respect, as Trendelenburg put it, "the fact of science", i.e., that the sciences had established and proven themselves, and that they were autonomous, not needing the guidance of philosophy to reach their results.



This critical attitude toward idealist methodology brought with it a re-appraisal of the role of *Naturphilosophie*, the philosophical approach to nature characteristic of the idealist tradition. The old methods of *Naturphilosophie*—the a priori constructions of Schelling or the dialectical maneuvers of Hegel—had to be abandoned in favor of a more empirical approach. Nevertheless, though Trendelenburg and Lotze were highly critical of *Naturphilosophie*, they were far from wanting to discard it, as the materialists and neo-Kantians recommended. There was still much of great value in that tradition: the attempt to systematize the results of the empirical sciences, and critical reflection upon their basic principles and presuppositions. There was general consent that if philosophy were to remain a vibrant intellectual force in the nineteenth century, it would have to take account of the new empirical sciences; but for just that reason, Trendelenburg and Lotze believed, the tradition of *Naturphilosophie* should continue. On no account should the baby of philosophical reflection about the sciences be thrown out with the bathwater of a priori constructions.

It was not only in methodology, however, that Lotze and Trendelenburg would attempt to reform the idealist tradition. It was also in its discourse, its language, and vocabulary. One of the least appealing aspects of the idealist tradition from Kant down to Hegel is its notorious obscurity, which derives not least from its esoteric vocabulary and technical jargon. To understand idealist texts, it seems, one needs to be gifted with intellectual intuitions, or one has to cultivate a special technique of reasoning (the dialectic). All this obscurity and mystery disappears with Lotze and Trendelenburg. The discourse of idealism now becomes open, exoteric, and straightforward. Trendelenburg and Lotze were masters of style, writing in simple and elegant German prose. All attentive readers were invited to think along with them, to assess for themselves the truth and value of what had been said. Of course, as in all philosophy, they would sometimes use technical terms; but then they carefully defined them in more simple vernacular terms. No one in the new scientific age was willing to tolerate the esoteric hocus-pocus of intellectual intuitions or the arcane art of dialectic; Trendelenburg and Lotze met this challenge by simplifying the language and reasoning of German idealism. One of their greatest achievements was thus their *exoteric rationalization* of the idealist tradition, their making it accessible to the reasoning and inspection of everyman.

Ultimately, Trendelenburg's and Lotze's reform of the idealist tradition was a matter of retaining its *content*—objective idealism and the organic worldview—but discarding its *form*—its methods and technical vocabulary. But to reaffirm that content was also to accept the abiding value of one very controversial part of philosophy: metaphysics. Metaphysics had become suspect in Germany ever since Kant's devastating critique of the rationalist tradition in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Acutely aware of the challenges posed by that critique, Trendelenburg and Lotze reconceived the task of metaphysics. Metaphysics was for them no longer a priori speculation and demonstrations about the unconditioned, but critical reflection upon the most general presuppositions of the sciences and the attempt to systematize their results. Trendelenburg's and Lotze's

critique of the dialectic and method of construction are essentially a re-application of some of Kant's major points against the rationalist tradition.

Although greatly indebted to Kant's critique of metaphysics, Trendelenburg and Lotze also had their reservations about it. In their view, Kant's critique did not invalidate the classical mission or central task of metaphysics: critical reflection upon the general presuppositions of the sciences, or the attempt to formulate a general world-view. Though one should not presume to reach dogmatic conclusions about the universe as a whole through deductive reasoning, as the great rationalists and idealists had done, one could still reach tentative and hypothetical conclusions about it. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with metaphysics, they believed, provided that one engages in it in a tentative, hypothetical, and non-dogmatic spirit, and provided that one does not attempt to conceal it with some pretense of intuition and a special method. In any case, Kant's embargo against all metaphysics had been premature and self-defeating, for some of the basic epistemological questions he had raised could be answered only by discussing issues in metaphysics. Though he was loath to admit it, Kant's own transcendental idealism, which was his solution to the problem of knowledge, was itself a form of metaphysics, having to make all kinds of claims about the ontological status of the object of knowledge and its relation to the subject.

### 3. Personal Relations and the Absence Thereof

Since they were contemporaries and shared a common philosophy, one might think that Trendelenburg and Lotze collaborated, that they formed an alliance to advance their cause and to vanquish their foes. After all, the young idealists, Fichte and Schelling, then Schelling and Hegel, had done just that in late 1790s and early 1800s. But nothing like that ever took place with Trendelenburg and Lotze. As fate would have it, the two men never met. For nearly thirty years they stood apart from one another, Lotze in Göttingen and Trendelenburg in Berlin, never traversing the short distance between them. They were two isolated beacons of idealism in their age, shining across the broad and wild seas of naturalism.

Now and then, though, their light rays would cross. Though they never met, they did correspond with one another, and their letters reveal great mutual respect. Shortly after his *Metaphysik* appeared in 1841, Lotze sent a copy to Trendelenburg, who duly read it and wrote an appreciative reply.<sup>2</sup> He told Lotze that he could agree with his polemics and with some of his results, and that he liked his exposition and general teleological view of the world. But he was frank in expressing his reservations about some aspects of Lotze's doctrine, especially his failure to provide a solid basis for his own teleological doctrine. He also took exception to Lotze's criticisms of his *Logische Untersuchungen*. In his *Metaphysik* Lotze had criticized the absence of teleology in the

<sup>2</sup> See Trendelenburg to Lotze, April 10, 1841, in *Hermann Lotze, Briefe und Dokumente*, ed. Reinhardt Pester (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), 115–116.

first volume of that work; but that absence was only illusory, Trendelenburg insisted, because teleology was introduced into the second volume, and it was indeed the basis for everything in the first. Since Lotze's critique of the first volume really demonstrated his agreement with its second, Trendelenburg happily concluded that they were ultimately one in their general worldview.

It would be naive, however, to suppose that geographic separation ruined the opportunity for a beautiful intellectual partnership. There are in fact good reasons for thinking that the two great idealists would never have joined forces to write a common manifesto, for now and then in their correspondence they would express their reservations about one another's work. Trendelenburg was not entirely impressed with Lotze's *Mikrokosmos*. After Lotze sent him the first volume of his magnum opus in 1865, he told him that he found his concept of the soul and his occasionalism much too speculative.<sup>3</sup> He also wished that Lotze would write a more technical work, because only in that way could one fully appreciate the philosophical basis for his views. Lotze, for his part, also did not warm to every product of Trendelenburg's pen. He found Trendelenburg's critique of Herbart "weak",<sup>4</sup> and he had failed to write a review of Trendelenburg's *Naturrecht* because, as he confided to his friend Solomon Hirzel, he did not want to offend the author.<sup>5</sup> As much as he liked Trendelenburg, he disapproved of his entire way of writing about natural law.

Still, if the two men never met, it was not for lack of trying, at least on Trendelenburg's part. In 1853, in his capacity as head of the faculty of philosophy, Trendelenburg led the campaign to acquire Lotze for the University of Berlin.<sup>6</sup> He was convinced that philosophy stood in dire need of a man like Lotze, who understood the new empirical sciences, and who could make philosophy responsive to them. It is clear from Trendelenburg's letter of March 11, 1855, to Lotze that he saw him as an ally in their struggle to preserve the idealist legacy in the universities.<sup>7</sup> That legacy gave philosophy supreme place in education, and rightly so, because it alone made the student think for himself, and because it alone gave him an understanding of the general foundation

<sup>3</sup> See Trendelenburg to Lotze, December 14, 1856, *Hermann Lotze, Briefe und Dokumente*, 292.

<sup>4</sup> See Trendelenburg to George Croom Robertson, October 22, 1873, *Hermann Lotze, Briefe und Dokumente*, 590. Lotze was referring to Trendelenburg's *Über Herbarts Metaphysik und eine neue Auffassung derselben* (Berlin: Bethge, 1854 and 1856) and *Herbarts praktische Philosophie und die Ethik der Alten*, in *Philosophischen Abhandlungen der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (Berlin, 1857), 37–69. Trendelenburg had sent Lotze both these pieces in December 1856 *Hermann Lotze, Briefe und Dokumente*, 291–292.

<sup>5</sup> See Lotze to Solomon Hirzel, July 10, 1861, *Hermann Lotze, Briefe und Dokumente*, 381–382. Lotze does not explain what he dislikes about Trendelenburg's methods, "diese ganze Bearbeitungsweise der Dinge". Lotze's and Trendelenburg's political views were indeed very close. Both were moderate liberals, though Lotze leaned more to the right of center. One fundamental difference between them concerns their attitude toward constitutionalism. Trendelenburg opposed, and Lotze supported, Savigny's campaign against a new written constitution for Germany.

<sup>6</sup> See "Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg: Sitzungsprotokoll", November 11, 1853, in *Hermann Lotze, Briefe und Dokumente* (n 2), 239.

<sup>7</sup> See Trendelenburg to Lotze, March 11, 1855, *Hermann Lotze, Briefe und Dokumente*, 262.

of all the sciences. But the growing demands of vocational training, and the increasing specialization of the sciences, had put this legacy in jeopardy. There was no man more qualified to defend it than Lotze, Trendelenburg firmly believed. It was above all a matter of “re-establishing the lost faith”, he told Lotze. And he did not have to explain what that “lost faith” meant: it was the basic intellectual values of the idealist tradition.

For some thirteen years Trendelenburg worked tirelessly to get Lotze for Berlin. He had made no less than five applications to the Ministry of Culture, which, however, had been persistently uncooperative, mainly for budgetary reasons. When Trendelenburg was finally granted approval to make Lotze an offer in the spring of 1866, Lotze rejected it, chiefly on personal grounds. He found it difficult to move his family to Berlin, and he did not want to abandon his tranquil rural life in Göttingen for the hustle and bustle of urban life in Berlin. Despite all his efforts, now in vain, Trendelenburg took Lotze’s rejection in good part. He finally wrote Lotze in July 1868 to express his regrets that Lotze was not coming to Berlin.<sup>8</sup> But he could well understand that Lotze did not want to exchange his pastoral life for “this mass of stones without a garden”. He then wished Lotze well in his future life in Göttingen. That salutation was his final farewell. With that, the prospect of a meeting between the last two great idealists vanished.

As it happened, Lotze did finally come to Berlin. In 1880 the Faculty of Philosophy made him another offer, which he accepted. And in April 1881 Lotze finally moved to the city on the Spree, but by then it was much too late for any collaboration or friendship. For now Trendelenburg had lain in his grave for nearly ten years. Only months after his arrival in Berlin, Lotze too died, thus ending late idealism in Germany.

Why should we not let them rest in peace? Why should we bother to revive such lost and forgotten philosophers as Trendelenburg and Lotze? The simple answer is that they are the missing links, the bridge connecting the idealist tradition of the early nineteenth century and the intellectual movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To understand the origins and context of neo-Kantianism, British absolute idealism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, it is eventually necessary to pay homage to these late idealists. The task of the following chapters is to provide a basic introduction into the career and philosophy of two of the most important and neglected philosophers of the nineteenth century.

<sup>8</sup> See Trendelenburg to Lotze, July 10, 1868, *Hermann Lotze, Briefe und Dokumente*, 486.

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PART I

Trendelenburg

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## Place in History

### The Shrouded Colossus

On November 19, 1903, in a speech given on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, Wilhelm Dilthey reminisced about his teachers during his student years at the University of Berlin.<sup>1</sup> They were indeed an imposing lot: Leopold von Ranke, Alexander von Humboldt, Friedrich von Savigny, Franz Bopp, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. But amid this cast of luminaries there was one thinker who especially came to mind and who had the greatest influence of all upon him. That man was Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg (1802–1872). Dilthey regretted that his name was nearly forgotten now, and that it was nearly impossible for people to understand the importance he once had for his generation. But it was Trendelenburg who taught him the value of the history of philosophy, and who represented for him the enduring importance of the idealist tradition.

If we have even an idle historical curiosity, Dilthey's memoir prompts us to ask: who was this Trendelenburg? But our interest becomes less idle, even urgent, when we note that Dilthey was not the only thinker of stature to have been influenced by Trendelenburg. For among Trendelenburg's students at the University of Berlin were four other thinkers who would later leave their mark on early twentieth-century philosophy, and who also stood very much in Trendelenburg's debt: George Morris, Rudolf Eucken, Hermann Cohen and Franz Brentano.<sup>2</sup> Last but not least,

<sup>1</sup> "Rede zum 70. Geburtstag", in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), V, 7–9. On Trendelenburg's influence on Dilthey, see Michael Ermath, *Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 59–61; Erik Kreiter, "Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg und die Weltanschauungslehre Diltheys", Gudrun Kühne-Betram, "Einflüsse Trendelenburgs auf Wilhelm Diltheys Philosophie und Logik des Lebens", and Hans-Ulrich Lessing, "Trendelenburgs Logische Untersuchungen und Diltheys Theorie der Wissenschaften", in *Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburgs Wirkung*, ed. Gerald Hartung and Klaus Christian Köhnke (Eutin: Eutiner Landesbibliothek, 2006), pp. 143–168, 169–189, and 191–203.

<sup>2</sup> George Sylvester Morris was a seminal influence in early American philosophy. He attended Trendelenburg's lectures in Berlin in 1866–1868. Morris wrote an article on Trendelenburg introducing him to the American public. See "Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg", *The New Englander* 33 (1874), 337–355. On Morris, see Marc Edmund Jones, *George Sylvester Morris: His Philosophical Career and Theistic Idealism* (Philadelphia: D. McKay, Co., 1948). Rudolf Eucken was a prominent *Lebensphilosoph*, the leading Aristotelian of his generation, and in 1908 a Nobel Prize winner. On Trendelenburg's influence on him, see his *Lebenserinnerungen* (Leipzig: Koheler, 1922), 38–40, 54–55; and Uwe Dathe, "»Mit der Fackel Trendelenburgs in der Hand.« Rudolf Euckens Treue zu Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg", in *Trendelenburgs Wirkung*, 105–122. Hermann Cohen was the father of Marburg neo-Kantianism. On Trendelenburg's influence on him, see Andrea Poma, *The Critical Philosophy of Hermann Cohen* (Albany: Suny 1997), 4–6, 9–10, 13,



there was still another thinker of even greater renown who also felt deeply indebted to Trendelenburg: Søren Kierkegaard.<sup>3</sup> In later years he much regretted that he missed the opportunity to attend Trendelenburg's lectures while a student in Berlin. For it was Trendelenburg's writings that gave him the courage and confidence as a young man to question Hegel's bewitching and bewildering dialectic.

When we consider all the thinkers influenced by Trendelenburg we soon realize that we stand before a colossus. Yet a shrouded one. For Trendelenburg remains largely an unknown. It as if the mists of the Spree swirling around him have never lifted. Scholarly study of Trendelenburg is still in its infancy. There is no collected edition of his writings, many of which are still unpublished; there is no edition of his letters; and there are no critical editions of even his most important works. Some works have been reprinted, though poorly,<sup>4</sup> while original editions of his most important works are literally crumbling into dust.<sup>5</sup> There have been only a few scholarly monographs on Trendelenburg, though they do him scant justice.<sup>6</sup> Fortunately, however, there has been one intellectual biography of Trendelenburg by one of his students that is invaluable and will forever remain our chief source about his life and writings: Ernst Bratuschek's *Adolf Trendelenburg*.<sup>7</sup> There are also encouraging signs that Trendelenburg might have finally arrived. Recently, Klaus Köhnke, in his magisterial study on neo-Kantianism, has noted the seminal role of Trendelenburg and given new impetus to work on him.<sup>8</sup>

269–270. Poma states that Trendelenburg's relation to Cohen has been understudied. On Trendelenburg's influence on Brentano, see Oskar Kraus, "Biographical Sketch of Franz Brentano", in Linda McAlister, ed., *The Philosophy of Brentano* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1976), 1–10, esp. 2–3; and Wilhelm Baumgartner, "Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburgs Kategorienlehre—Ein Wegweiser für Franz Brentanos Ontologie", in *Trendelenburgs Wirkung*, 205–219. Brentano studied Aristotle under Trendelenburg in Berlin in 1858–1859. Brentano dedicated his first book, *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles* (Freiburg: Herder, 1862), to Trendelenburg. Brentano's conception of the method of philosophy, and his analysis of the forms of judgment, also indicate the influence of Trendelenburg.

<sup>3</sup> On Kierkegaard's relationship to Trendelenburg, see Niels Thulstrup, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 275–276, 280, 285, 314, 315, 359. Thulstrup notes: "There can hardly be any doubt that Trendelenburg, both positively, through his presentation of Aristotelian logic, and negatively, through his profound and sharp criticism of Hegelian logic, had great importance for Kierkegaard" (314). See Kierkegaard's eulogy of Trendelenburg in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), I, 110.

<sup>4</sup> In 2005 Adamant Media Corporation reprinted Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen*. Yet a serious mistake has gone into the reprinting, a kind all too common in the digital age. The first volume is from the 1862 edition; the second from the 1870 edition. There are important differences between these editions.

<sup>5</sup> The copy of Trendelenburg's *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik* which I obtained from the University of Pennsylvania library, though apparently never used, was in such fragile condition that it fell apart upon the slightest touch. Simply to turn the pages was to make confetti. Fortunately, the work has been digitized by Google.

<sup>6</sup> The main monographs on Trendelenburg's philosophy have been Gershon Rosenstock, *F.A. Trendelenburg* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964); and Peter Petersen's *Die Philosophie Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburgs* (Hamburg: Boysen, 1913). For a critical account of the contents of these works, see the bibliographical appendix.

<sup>7</sup> Ernst Bratuschek, *Adolf Trendelenburg* (Berlin: Henschel, 1873). (Reprint by Adamant Media Corporation in 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Klaus Köhnke, *Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), 23–57. Since Köhnke's work has appeared, there have been two monographs in Italian on Trendelenburg. See Edoardo

We cannot understand Trendelenburg's historical importance, though, simply by noting his influence on a later generation. We also need to know Trendelenburg's achievements, what he contributed to the scholarship and philosophy of his age, apart from his effect on particular thinkers. If we take a broad historical perspective, placing Trendelenburg in the context of the nineteenth century as a whole, then we find that he is important for several reasons:

- Trendelenburg marks the end of Hegelian hegemony in logic and metaphysics. His *Logische Untersuchungen*, first published in the 1840s when Hegel's influence was at its height, contains a devastating critique of his dialectic. Though Schelling and Feuerbach also made influential criticisms of Hegel, their criticisms were not as thorough or telling.
- Trendelenburg's main work on social and political philosophy—*Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik*—was the classical philosophical statement of German liberalism in the nineteenth century. All the basic values of the liberal constitution of 1848 find their rationale within it. Trendelenburg's treatise was indeed the last major defense of the natural law tradition against the historicist and positivist forces of his age.
- Trendelenburg was the last great Aristotelian, the father of the Aristotle revival in the nineteenth century. He was probably the greatest scholar of classical philosophy since Schleiermacher. His edition of *De Anima* became a model for Aristotle scholarship.
- One of the most exacting philosophical historians of his age, Trendelenburg set new standards for the interpretation of historical texts, both modern and ancient. He stressed the importance of understanding a text in its original language, in its individuality, and in its historical context, according to the intentions of its author. In this respect his work had a lasting influence on Eucken, Dilthey and Brentano.
- Trendelenburg was one of the originators of what is now called *Begriffsgeschichte*,<sup>9</sup> the investigation of the origin of a philosophical concept in ordinary discourse, the problem it attempts to solve and the presuppositions it contains. His work was the inspiration for Rudolf Eucken's project for a study of the history of philosophical concepts, a project which finally came to fruition in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*.<sup>10</sup>

Fugali, *Anima e movimento: teoria della conoscenza e psicologia in Trendelenburg* (Milan: Angeli, 2002), and Matteo Guidotti, *L'utopia dell'idealismo: Hegel, Herbart e il ritorno a Kant nella teoria dell'esperienza di Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg* (Milan: Unicopli, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> On Trendelenburg's role in the development of *Begriffsgeschichte*, see the brilliant article by Gunter Scholz, "Trendelenburg und die Begriffsgeschichte", in *Trendelenburgs Wirkung*, 221–239.

<sup>10</sup> *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter (Basel: Schwabe & Co, 1971), 13 vols.

As with any great philosopher, we must be careful how we describe Trendelenburg's significance. Though there have been relatively few studies on Trendelenburg, they have sometimes given misleading accounts of his place in history. Trendelenburg is often said to mark the end of the idealist tradition and to be the crucial transitional figure between idealism and neo-Kantianism.<sup>11</sup> But this statement can be very misleading—in one sense true and another false—because the term “idealism” is ambiguous. While Trendelenburg was a sharp critic of the “subjective idealism” of Kant and Fichte, who would reduce nature down to appearances of a transcendental subject, he was a champion of the “objective idealism” of Hegel, Schelling and the romantics, which holds that all of nature conforms to the ideal or archetypical.<sup>12</sup> Trendelenburg is also said to be “a pioneer of naturalism”, a champion of “naturalist epistemology” *avant la lettre* and in this respect a forerunner of John Dewey.<sup>13</sup> But this interpretation too can be misleading, given that there is no univocal sense of “naturalism”. If by a “naturalist epistemology” one means an epistemology that opposes Cartesian dualism and places the mind within nature, Trendelenburg can be described as a naturalist; but if one means an epistemology that reduces everything within the mind to natural laws like those of the physical sciences, then one ascribes to him the very doctrine he opposed. Trendelenburg's metaphysics was first and foremost an attempt to fuse idealism and realism, so that it is one-sided to see it from either perspective alone.

Trendelenburg's ultimate aim as a philosopher was to preserve the legacy of Plato and Aristotle in the modern world, to show how their philosophy still plays a fundamental role in the foundation of the empirical sciences. He feared that this legacy was in danger of being swept away by the advance of the empirical sciences, and he realized that, to preserve it, it was necessary to modernize it, i.e., to show how its metaphysics is relevant to empirical science. The new empirical sciences were a basic fact of modern life, Trendelenburg believed, and it was the task of philosophy to explain rather than replace or surpass them. Metaphysics would therefore have to re-orient itself since the days of the grand idealist systems. It could no longer be speculation about the absolute, as Fichte, Schelling and Hegel believed, but it would have to be a transcendental account of the necessary presuppositions of empirical science. Trendelenburg's strategy to revive Aristotle's metaphysics was to show how one of its central concepts—the principle of *energia*—is a necessary condition of the mathematization of nature. Trendelenburg's signature theme, his famous metaphysics of motion, was essentially an attempt to rationalize the mathematization of nature in psychology and physics. The omnipresence of motion in mind and nature, and its status as the ultimate reality, meant that there is no limit to the mathematical conceptualization of nature itself. Trendelenburg distanced himself decisively from Kant and Hegel, whom, he argued, could not explain this aspect of modern science. Kant had

<sup>11</sup> See Köhnke, *Neukantianismus*, 23, 25, 32, 37, 39.

<sup>12</sup> We will have occasion to explain and confirm this interpretation below, Part I, chapter 3, section 5.

<sup>13</sup> Rosenstock, *Trendelenburg*, 43, 52, 78, 83, 91.

limited mathematics to appearances while Hegel had relegated it to the lower realm of quantity. The point was to show how mathematics could grasp all reality—the mental and physical—and how it could hold for reality itself, not only the realm of appearances. Plato and Aristotle had already provided the basics of that explanation, and the only task now was to revive them.

The goal of the next five chapters is to give the English reader an introduction to all aspects of Trendelenburg's thought. We will have to focus most on Trendelenburg's metaphysics and epistemology, but we will not neglect his ethics and aesthetics. We will attempt to locate his work in its historical context, and to identify the most problematic aspects in the interpretation of his philosophy. Needless to say, much more needs to be done for a full appreciation of Trendelenburg. Our task now is only to remove the nimbus surrounding him and to pave the way for future investigation.

## 2

# Early Years (1802–1840)

### 1. *Bildungsjahre*

Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg was born in Eutin November 30, 1802. The Trendelenburg family belonged to one of the old patrician clans of the *Hansastädte*. Its members were prominent burghers, viz., judges, clerics, mayors and city councilors. Trendelenburg's grandfather was a doctor in Lübeck, and his father, Friedrich Wilhelm Trendelenburg, was a civil servant who eventually became the Danish post commissioner in Eutin. Having a love for science and art, Friedrich Wilhelm was devoted to the education of his four children, especially to that of his only son, Friedrich Adolf. Apparently, Friedrich Wilhelm was a pillar of the community, a model father and citizen. His wife, the daughter of a country preacher, was a loving mother devoted to her children, in whom she strived to instill the virtues of modesty, frugality and charity. It was largely due to her encouragement that there was an atmosphere of religious piety in her household. Like most people from Northern Germany, the Trendelenburgs were Protestant. The Protestantism that prevailed in the family was a moderate enlightened variety. All his life Friedrich Adolf would remain loyal to the family faith.

Eutin, though a small town, was not provincial in outlook. Many of its leading families were highly cultivated and prized the study of classical antiquity and modern literature. The town, known as the "*Weimar des Nordens*", was proud of its culture. It had some literary renown from the many writers who had once lived or worked there (viz., F.H. Jacobi, J.G. Schlosser, Friedrich zu Stolberg). In 1796 Jacobi and Stolberg, fleeing the French invasions, found refuge in Eutin and founded there their *Deutsches Museum*. The Eutin Gymnasium, where Friedrich Adolf was a student, had been established by no less than Johann Heinrich Voss (1751–1826), the famous poet, translator, and editor. It was there that he did his famous translation of the *Iliad*. Though Voß left the Gymnasium the year Friedrich Adolf was born, his influence on the institution was a lasting one in the emphasis on literature and classical learning. Johann Heinrich Tischbein (1751–1829), the famous portrait painter, also spent his last years in Eutin. The young Friedrich Adolf was introduced to him, and their various meetings were important for the formation of his aesthetic views.

The most important figure in Friedrich Adolf's early intellectual development was the rector at the Eutin gymnasium, L.G. König, an eccentric figure revered by his

students. Very genial, informal, and liberal, König strived to impart to his students a love for classical literature. His manner was familiar and kind rather than strict and severe. Convinced that learning had to come from “a free act of will”, he encouraged his students to think for themselves. A cultivated and well-educated man, König had studied philology under Heyne at Göttingen, and he had published several learned studies on classical authors. He also had clear philosophical sympathies, which he happily revealed to his students. He was a Kantian, and so convinced of Kant’s merits that he even translated the *Metaphysik der Sitten* into Latin.<sup>1</sup> Given his Kantian sympathies, it was not surprising that he was suspicious of Fichte and disapproved of Schelling and Hegel, whose writings he found incomprehensible. Hegel’s dialectic he regarded as the “*proton pseudos*” of modern philosophy. He left it to Friedrich Adolf, one of his favorite and most promising students, to work out the reasons for such a view.

After excelling at the Gymnasium, Trendelenburg left Eutin in 1822 to study at the University of Kiel. Thanks to König’s stimulus, he planned to study philology, though, due to his mother’s prodding, he agreed to study theology too. But Trendelenburg soon gravitated toward philosophy. Kiel then had some very prominent philosophers on its faculty, whose appeal was hard to resist. The most renowned among them was Karl Leonhard Reinhold (1758–1823), who had played a prominent role in the early 1790s as a popularizer of Kant. His *Briefe über die kantische Philosophie* was one of the first works to defend and disseminate Kantian ideas in Germany. A professor of philosophy in Jena from 1787 to 1794, Reinhold became a central figure during Jena’s *Wunderjahre* (1790–1800),<sup>2</sup> those heady days when German idealism and romanticism were born. When Trendelenburg came to Kiel, Reinhold was an old man, his glory years far behind him. His intellectual restlessness and insecurity had put him through many a philosophical transformation: he had been a convert first to Kant, then to Fichte, then to Jacobi, and finally to Bardili, only to declare them all bankrupt in the end. Now, in his final years, he would devote himself to teaching and philosophy of language. Apparently, Reinhold had a close relationship with the young Trendelenburg, whom had been much recommended by his teachers at Eutin. Trendelenburg attended Reinhold’s lectures on anthropology and the history of philosophy, and he even went to his *Privatissimi*, his informal private meetings with select students at his home. There, in an intimate setting and directly from the lips of one of its greatest representatives, Trendelenburg would learn about the golden days of German philosophy.

Another important philosopher on the Kiel faculty, from whom the young Trendelenburg would learn even more, was Johann Erich von Berger (1772–1833).<sup>3</sup> A Dane, Berger was educated in Copenhagen where he had studied law. While

<sup>1</sup> L.G. König, *Elementa metaphysica juris doctrinae* (Amsterdam: Hengst, 1799).

<sup>2</sup> For a portrait of Jena in that decade, see Theodore Ziolkowski, *Das Wunderjahr in Jena: Geist und Gesellschaft 1794–5* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> On Berger, see Ratjen Henning, *Johann Erich von Bergers Leben* (Altona: Hemmerich, 1835).

preparing for a career in government service, Berger had become seduced by philosophy, drawn into the vortex of ideas whirling around Jena and Weimar. During a stay in Göttingen he had read Reinhold's *Briefe*, which proved decisive in luring him to philosophy. So off he went to Jena, where he studied first under Reinhold and then under Fichte. Berger was one of the founding members of *Die Gesellschaft der freien Männer*, a fraternity formed according to Fichtean ideals.<sup>4</sup> He devoted himself to the study of Fichte's philosophy for four years; but then, inspired by Schelling's *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*, he, with his fellow Dane Heinrich Steffens, turned toward the study of *Naturphilosophie*. After trying to lead an independent life as a farmer, Berger eventually became professor of philosophy in Kiel in 1814. When Trendelenburg began to attend his lectures, he was in the middle of writing his *magnum opus*, his *Allgemeine Grundzüge der Wissenschaft*, a massive four volume work discussing the foundation of knowledge, natural science, and ethics.<sup>5</sup> From this work Trendelenburg would learn much. It was his introduction to the basic ideas of *Naturphilosophie*: the organic conception of nature, the abiding importance of teleology, the unity of subject and object in nature. Anticipating one of Trendelenburg's signature ideas, Berger stressed the primacy of movement in nature,<sup>6</sup> how time is inner movement and space external movement. It has been said that Berger planted the germs of Trendelenburg's mature system, and that Trendelenburg's did little more than provide an Aristotelian basis for Berger's ideas.<sup>7</sup>

Though seduced by philosophy in his first semesters in Kiel, Trendelenburg never abandoned his plans to study philology. He attended the lectures on Pindar, Plato, and Roman history by Wilhelm Wachsmuth (1787–1866), who had been a student of Reinhold Niebuhr, and who had become a theorist of history of some note.<sup>8</sup> More importantly for his intellectual development, Trendelenburg received private instruction from the *Privatdozent* Peter Wilhelm Forchhammer, a classicist who specialized in Plato and Aristotle. It was a token of his continuing interest in philology that Trendelenburg wrote a prize-winning essay on the neologisms of the Roman playwright Plautus.<sup>9</sup> He wrote on that subject because, as he explained in the preface, from neologisms one could learn the history of a language, which was a key to the history of a people.

After three semesters of study in Kiel, from Easter 1822 to Christmas 1823, Trendelenburg had exhausted much of what that university could offer him. There

<sup>4</sup> On that society and Berger's role in it, see Willy Flitner, *August Ludwig Hülsen und der Bund der freien Männer* (Jena: Eugen Diederich, 1913).

<sup>5</sup> Johann Erich von Berger, *Allgemeine Grundzüge der Wissenschaft* (Altona: Hemmerich, 1817–21), 4 vols.

<sup>6</sup> Berger, *Grundzüge* I, 253–255, 275; II, 28–29.

<sup>7</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 23. This is to go too far, because there are profound Hegelian elements to Berger's method and metaphysics that Trendelenburg repudiates. Berger states his debts to Hegel's method in *Grundzüge* II, 5.

<sup>8</sup> On Wachsmuth, see Joachim Wach, *Das Verstehen* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1926–33), III, 59–65.

<sup>9</sup> The essay, *De Plauto, Latinae linguae nova vocabulorum compositione et derivatione peregrinarumque vocum hospitio amplificandae praecipuo auctore*, was, according to the terms of the competition, never published.

were few opportunities for a solid and broad training in philology at Kiel; and since Trendelenburg was still intent on a better grounding in that discipline, he decided to go elsewhere. Leipzig beckoned him. For at that time there reigned in the Saxon capital one of the greatest philologists of the day, Gottfried Hermann (1772–1848), who had been called “the first Greek of Germany”. Trendelenburg duly attended Hermann’s lectures and became a member of his Greek society. Though he admired Hermann and learned much from him, Leipzig proved a disappointment. It did not have the close relationships between students and faculty that he had enjoyed in Kiel; and having no friends, Trendelenburg felt lost and lonely in a large city. He continued with philology, though only because Berger had convinced him that the ancients were the best foundation for the study of philosophy itself. It was in Leipzig that Trendelenburg began to study earnestly and systematically, mainly on his own, classical philosophy, especially Plato and Aristotle. Eventually, Forchhammer joined him, and together they would read the ancients and some modern philosophy, especially Kant.

In the summer of 1824 Trendelenburg had grown weary of Leipzig. Forchhammer had to go home to Holstein, so loneliness loomed again. He had heard much about the intellectual ferment in Berlin, whose faculty then had the brightest stars in the German firmament. Though he had some initial reluctance to go to another large urban university, the opportunity to study under the great names eventually proved an overwhelming temptation. In Berlin there was Schleiermacher and Hegel, as well as August Boeckh, the great philologist. In a long letter to his father, written August 4, 1824, Trendelenburg explained that the main reason for his decision to go to Berlin was to get a deeper and broader training in philology. Boeckh’s more theoretical approach would be the perfect complement to Hermann’s more grammatical one.<sup>10</sup> It was more than philology, though, that drew Trendelenburg to Berlin. His letter to his father reveals another attraction: Schleiermacher and Hegel. While he had nothing but respect for Schleiermacher, he was already suspicious of Hegel. But, strangely, these suspicions were reasons for going to Berlin, not for staying away. Trendelenburg was curious about this great dialectical magician, against whom he itched to test his intellectual mettle. Note this revealing passage from the August 4 letter to his father:

Regarding his [Hegel’s] views, as far as I understand them, I am a decided opponent, and I do not believe that clarity and truth in science and life will be promoted by them. But the man is making a big noise, and one sees him as the apex of our age. And so I am driven to get to know him better, so that I can examine him closely and try my powers against him.<sup>11</sup>

Having received his father’s blessing, Trendelenburg went to Berlin. He walked from Leipzig to Berlin in ten days in October 1824. He quickly established himself there, renting a small garret room in the *Artilleriestraße* close to the Spree. Boeckh was so impressed with his new student that he immediately admitted him into his

<sup>10</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 39.

<sup>11</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 39.



seminar and invited him to his *Privatissimi* at home. With Boeckh's favorite students, Trendelenburg formed a classics club where they read Aristophanes and spoke Latin. After a few months, he felt quite at home. Now he was in the center of things, and excited by all the city had to offer. He was very active in going to the cornucopia of lectures available to him. In his first semester, Michaelmas 1824, he heard a series of lectures by Heinrich Steffens on *Naturphilosophie*, which fascinated him. Steffens' lectures would have complemented what he had already learned about *Naturphilosophie* from Berger. In addition to attending Boeckh's lectures, Trendelenburg went to hear Hegel expound his philosophy of world history. Unfortunately, this did not cure but only confirmed his prejudices. He did not like Hegel's halting oral delivery; and he disapproved of his dialectical method, the rigid universality-particularity-individuality routine, which was mechanically applied to all the different phenomena of world history. Trendelenburg soon decided that he had enough. Though he was still very interested in Hegel's logic, there was for that the lectures of Hegel's student, Leopold Henning, who, by general repute, was much clearer than the master himself. It was only in his third and final semester in Berlin, the summer of 1825, that Trendelenburg would finally hear Schleiermacher, who then lectured on aesthetics. In this case Trendelenburg was not disappointed at all: he was thrilled by Schleiermacher's exposition, which would reconstruct for the listener the process of discovery itself. From Boeckh's and Schleiermacher's lectures Trendelenburg was learning a general historical approach to philosophy, the need to understand the past in its own terms and to explain it in its original context. This was a lesson, as we shall soon see, that would be decisive for his later philosophy.

The fruit of Trendelenburg's early Berlin years (1824–1826) was his doctoral dissertation, *Platonis de ideis et numeris doctrina ex Aristotele illustrata*, which was published in 1826.<sup>12</sup> This work was the culmination of Trendelenburg's intensive study of Plato and Aristotle in his Leipzig years. Its immediate theme and context grew out of Schleiermacher's attempt to find systematic unity and coherence in Plato's dialogues.<sup>13</sup> Trendelenburg was sympathetic to Schleiermacher's project, and believed he could support it with a new source of evidence. Aristotle had been the student of Plato for twenty-some years, and scattered in his writings were many references to Plato's doctrines. Trendelenburg believed that these references could fill in some of the missing pieces of the systematic puzzle. And so he began to collect, organize and interpret Aristotle's many references to Plato's theory of ideas, which provided more than enough material for his dissertation. It was warmly received by the examiners, especially by Boeckh and the philologists. But it was to Trendelenburg's pleasant surprise that the one philosopher on the examination committee also liked it. That philosopher was no less than Hegel. Trendelenburg feared Hegel's reaction because in

<sup>12</sup> F.A. Trendelenburg, *Platonis de ideis et numeris doctrina ex Aristotele illustrata* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1826).

<sup>13</sup> On Schleiermacher's project, see Julia Lamm, 'Schleiermacher as Plato Scholar', *The Journal of Religion* 80 (2000), 206–239.

some passages he had criticized his dialectical approach to the history of philosophy; but Hegel took no offense, and he was very happy to agree with Trendelenburg's view, expressed here and there, that Aristotle was a better philosopher than Plato. So here, briefly, the two greatest Aristotelians of the modern era would celebrate common ground.

There were, however, other portentous signs of the conflict to come. For Hegel and Trendelenburg had another encounter outside the examination room, and this time it proved to be no pleasant surprise. Johannes Schulze, a fervent Hegelian who happened to be the aide to Baron von Altenstein, the Prussian minister of education,<sup>14</sup> had heard nice things about Trendelenburg from Boeckh. He decided to invite Trendelenburg to write articles for the *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, a journal started in 1826 by himself and other young Hegelians. The *Jahrbücher* was not meant to be simply a Hegelian mouthpiece; its main purpose was to stimulate discussion, and so it intended to solicit views from all shades of the philosophical spectrum. It was probably for this reason that Schulze, who expected no dyed-in-the-wool Hegelian, asked Trendelenburg to write for the journal. Trendelenburg, however, was wary, having been warned that he could not expect complete non-partisanship. Sure enough, his suspicions proved justified. Trendelenburg's reviews proved too provocative for the *Jahrbücher*. In a review of a book by Karl Michelet on Aristotle's ethics, which interpreted Aristotle in Hegelian terms, Trendelenburg complained about the "rigid schematism" applied in the interpretation, an undisguised reference to the Hegelian dialectic. Unamused, Hegel requested that the editorial board not publish the review, a request duly granted.<sup>15</sup> Though he went on to write two more short reviews for the *Jahrbücher*,<sup>16</sup> Trendelenburg knew that it was not the appropriate organ for him. He soon found a more congenial one in the newly inaugurated *Rheinisches Museum*, which was published by the historians Friedrich Niebuhr and Christian Brandis.<sup>17</sup>

Trendelenburg's provocative review, and Hegel's adverse reaction to it, are comprehensible only in the general context of the fractured intellectual landscape of Berlin in the 1820s. That landscape was divided into two warring parties, "the philosophers" and "the historians."<sup>18</sup> While the philosophers centered around Hegel, the historians revolved around Schleiermacher, Boeckh, Savigny, and Niebuhr. The disputes between these parties were many, some of them personal and petty but others philosophical

<sup>14</sup> On Schulze's central role in neo-Hegelianism, see John Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path toward Dialectical Humanism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1980), 100–102.

<sup>15</sup> It seems that the review, which does not appear in Köhnke's bibliography, was never published. Fortunately, Bratuscheck describes its content in some detail, *Trendelenburg*, 67–68.

<sup>16</sup> Review of Christian Petersen's *Philosophiae Chrysippae fundamenta in notionum dispositione posita e fragmentis restituit*, *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, Nr. 218–222 (1827) 1733–1744, 1745–1760, 1761–1765; and review of C.F. Neumann, *Mémoire sur la vie et les ouvrages de Davide*, *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, Nr. 100 (1829), 797–800.

<sup>17</sup> *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie, Geschichte und griechische Philosophie* (Bonn: Weber, 1827–29), 3 vols.

<sup>18</sup> The best account of the dispute between the historical and philosophical schools is still that of Ernst Simon, *Ranke und Hegel, Beiheft der Historische Zeitschrift* 15 (1928), 16–119.

and profound. The most important philosophical differences concerned method. The philosophers believed in the value of the dialectic, the power of reason to ascertain the basic patterns of history and nature, while the historians stressed the value of piecemeal historical enquiry, the impotence of reason to know anything a priori about history or nature. In this quarrel Trendelenburg's sympathies placed him firmly in the historians' camp. It was an affiliation that would soon shape his mature philosophy.

After completing his studies in Berlin in the summer of 1826, Trendelenburg returned to Eutin and his family for a Summer respite. Such had been his success in Berlin that opportunities soon came knocking at his door. He was offered a post at a *Gymnasium* in Lübeck, and as a professor of philology in Kiel. The Kiel offer was tempting, because it was near home and at a university for which he had fond memories. After much deliberation, though, Trendelenburg rejected both offers. His eye was on a bigger prize: teaching philosophy. Another opportunity soon came his way, though it too was not what he wanted. Through the mediation of Johannes von Schulze, he was offered a post as a *Hauslehrer* to the von Nagler family in Berlin, whose eleven-year-old son had to be prepared for the *Gymnasium*. Von Nagler, the *General Postmeister* of Prussia, had the closest relations to the government—he was the brother-in-law of Minister von Altenstein—and so this would bring Trendelenburg close to the highest offices in the land. Trendelenburg initially declined the offer, but Altenstein himself stepped in, making sure the offer would be to his satisfaction. Since the post was relatively well-paid, gave him leisure to pursue his own studies and the opportunity to travel, Trendelenburg eventually accepted. For the next seven years, from 1826 to 1833, he would work as a *Hauslehrer* to the von Nagler family.

During his years as *Hauslehrer* Trendelenburg continued his studies of classical philosophy. Following one of the leads of his dissertation, he began to investigate Aristotle's relationship to Plato's psychology, especially what Aristotle says about Plato in the first book of *De Anima*. From there he developed an interest in the *De Anima* as a whole, which he saw as the crux of Aristotle's whole philosophy. He was especially struck by Aristotle's thesis that the soul is the *entelechy* of the body, because this seemed to make movement the mediating concept between soul and body. Since he found the present text unsatisfactory, Trendelenburg resolved to provide a new edition. Although Immanuel Bekker had just published a new edition of *De Anima* in 1831, Trendelenburg still found it deficient because Bekker had not consulted the original edition or the Greek commentators. Trendelenburg therefore believed he could improve Bekker's edition and provide it with a commentary. His labors on Aristotle finally bore fruit in his *Aristotelis De Anima Libri tres*.<sup>19</sup> This edition, which was published in 1833, established Trendelenburg's reputation as an authority on Aristotle.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Aristotelis de anima libri tres* (Jena: Walz, 1833). A second edition was published in 1877 by Weber in Berlin. This edition was reproduced by the Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt in Graz in 1957.

<sup>20</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 80.

While still in the employ of the von Nagler family Trendelenburg had travelled to Paris in March 1833 with the purpose of consulting Aristotle manuscripts in the royal library. There he stayed for six happy weeks, working in the library during the day and going to the theater and concerts in the evening. One day during his stay he was summoned to the Prussian Embassy, where he was presented with a letter from Minister von Altenstein. The contents were a happy surprise. The letter contained the offer of an extraordinary professorship at the University of Berlin. Though the post would first be without salary, Trendelenburg was offered other employment with the Ministry of Education to earn a modest living in the meantime. Naturally, Trendelenburg accepted. Here was the promise of a career as a professor of philosophy, the ultimate reward for all his labors and patience. And so began his academic career. For the rest of his life Trendelenburg would be a professor of philosophy at the University of Berlin.

## 2. The Young Professor

To Herbert Schnädelbach we owe the fruitful idea that German philosophy in the nineteenth century suffered an identity crisis.<sup>21</sup> After Hegel's death in 1831, Schnädelbach maintains, philosophers struggled to define the purpose and identity of philosophy itself. The decline of metaphysics, the collapse of the speculative systems, and the rapid rise of the empirical sciences, all left philosophers wondering what they should do next. Since Kant, philosophers had abandoned the attempt to know the old objects of metaphysics, viz., God, the soul and freedom; but after Hegel, they also had misgivings about any effort to know the new objects of metaphysics, viz., the absolute, substance or the world soul. Understood as a science of pure reason, all metaphysics, whether Kantian or post-Kantian, seemed impossible. Philosophy also could not be an empirical enterprise, however, because the entire province of nature had already been carved up by the special sciences. What, then, was left for philosophy to do? Philosophy had given birth to all the sciences; but now that her children had grown up, she seemed to have no purpose anymore. This predicament of philosophy was well put by Wilhelm Windelband some fifty years later: "Philosophy is like King Lear, who, having shared all his goods among his children, is now thrown out on the street like a beggar."<sup>22</sup>

No one felt this crisis more acutely than the young Trendelenburg. Arriving in Berlin in May 1833, only a year and half after Hegel's death, he was an early witness to the onset of the crisis. The nature and purpose of philosophy was a central topic of his early lectures, and eventually of his first major work, the *Logische Untersuchungen*. Unfortunately, we know little about Trendelenburg's first lectures in Berlin; our scant

<sup>21</sup> Herbert Schnädelbach, *Philosophy in Germany 1831–1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Wilhelm Windelband, "Was ist Philosophie?", in *Präludien: Aufsätze und Reden zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte*, Fünfte Auflage (Tübingen: Mohr, 1924) I, 19.

knowledge of them comes entirely from Bratuscheck's brief and dense account.<sup>23</sup> It is striking, however, how much the lectures seem to revolve around the purpose and identity of philosophy.

Trendelenburg's inaugural lecture as *professor extraordinarius*, which he gave May 13, 1833, was devoted to the question of philosophy's place among the sciences.<sup>24</sup> Since he had to teach philosophy and philology, Trendelenburg made the relationship between these disciplines the chief subject of his lecture. He assigns an extraordinary significance to them, as if they alone comprise the entire realm of learning. All true science, he tells us, is Janus-faced: it has one older face looking to the past, which is philology, and another younger one looking to the future, which is philosophy. While philosophy is the unifying power of the sciences, philology is their preserving and regenerating power. True to the romantic legacy, Trendelenburg stresses the unity and interdependence of the sciences, and he focuses especially on the dependence of philosophy on philology. Philosophy needs philology because logic, which is the foundation of philosophy, must be based on a study of language, which is the chief object of philology. Since thinking is inner speaking, it is impossible to understand the laws of thinking without knowing the laws of language. Philosophy also needs philology to study its past, which is vital for philosophy, whose questions acquire their specific meaning only through history. Finally, philology is crucial to read the classics of philosophy, especially the works of Plato and Aristotle, which have been the source and inspiration for so much of the discipline. While Trendelenburg celebrates the recent revival in Platonic studies, he deplores the lack of interest in Aristotle, who is still looked down upon as vulgar empiricist. Without knowing Aristotle, one cannot know the true source of modern philosophy itself. With a rare complimentary nod to Hegel, whose *Geschichte der Philosophie* had only recently appeared,<sup>25</sup> Trendelenburg acknowledges that important work has just been done toward the revival of Aristotle. He vows that he will continue that work and make the study of Aristotle a central part of his teaching in Berlin.

A decisive phase in the development of Trendelenburg's conception of philosophy came with his critique of Hegel. Though he had his suspicions about Hegel even during his student years, Trendelenburg had still not explained or justified them, not even to himself. That would be a central task of his early lectures. No sooner had he returned to Berlin than he resolved to do battle against the still predominant Hegelianism there. But he would have to proceed with caution and stealth. Although Hegel now lay moldering in his grave, his legacy had been firmly planted in the university.<sup>26</sup> There were prominent Hegelians in the legal and theological faculties; there

<sup>23</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 77–94.

<sup>24</sup> This lecture was unpublished, and even its title is unknown. On its contents I have to rely on the summary in Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 77–78.

<sup>25</sup> Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Volumes 13–15 of *Werke*, ed. Phillip Marheineke et al. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1832).

<sup>26</sup> On the state of Hegelianism in the 1830s, see Toews, *Hegelianism*, 203–243.

were no less than three Hegelians (Hotho, Hennings and Michelet) in the philosophy faculty; and, last but hardly least, there were Hegelians in the government. Baron von Altenstein, Minister of Culture, and his aide, Johannes Schulze, were both Hegelians. Against such powerful entrenched forces, any opposition could be easily crushed. The memories of Schopenhauer's defeat, and Friedrich Beneke's dismissal, were neither old nor cold.<sup>27</sup>

Despite his wariness, Trendelenburg made a terrible blunder.<sup>28</sup> For the Summer Semester of 1833 he planned, true to his inaugural program, to lecture on Aristotle; but he announced his intentions from Paris, without having looked at the Berlin lecture catalogue. As a result, he found himself colliding with Michelet, his Hegelian nemesis, who also planned to lecture on Aristotle that very semester. So he now found himself in the very situation he wanted to avoid: open competition with the Hegelian party. The resulting contest for students resulted in Trendelenburg's defeat. He had only eight students, and he even had to cancel plans for *privatissimi* on Aristotle's *De Anima*. Trendelenburg, it seemed, was heading down the same path as Schopenhauer and Beneke.

It was only after the publication of *De Anima libri tres* in late 1833 that Trendelenburg began to make his name as an Aristotle scholar. After that, he had more success as a lecturer on classical philosophy. Now he could gather the nerve to criticize Hegel. In the Winter Semester of 1834/1835, his lectures on the history of philosophy closed with a critique of the Hegelian system. These final lectures proved a sensation, so much so that Hennings asked that one of his students, Johannes von Erdmann, attend them to spy on Trendelenburg. The Hegelians needed to know what was brewing against them. The critique of Hegel then became a regular feature of Trendelenburg's lectures on logic, which began in the Summer Semester of 1835, and which were repeated every semester thereafter.<sup>29</sup>

While we have little direct knowledge of what Trendelenburg said in these lectures, we can safely surmise that he began to formulate the basis for the position that would later appear in the *Logische Untersuchungen*. If this is so, Trendelenburg was already moving away from the conception of philosophy found in the idealist tradition of Reinhold, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. According to that conception, philosophy should be foundationalist, a *philosophia prima* that provides the basis for all knowledge. It was assumed that philosophy has the power, through reason alone, to provide a complete system of all the sciences. The most striking example of such philosophical self-confidence appears in Hegel's colossal three-volume *Enzyklopädie*

<sup>27</sup> In the Spring Semester of 1821 Schopenhauer had scheduled his lectures at the same time as Hegel's, and failed miserably at upstaging his rival. While Hegel's lectures were full, Schopenhauer had only five students. In February 1822 Beneke's *venia legendi* was withdrawn because his lectures offended the Hegelian sensibilities of Altenstein and Schulze. On the story behind Beneke's dismissal, see Otto Gramzow, *Friedrich Eduard Benkes Leben und Philosophie* (Bern: Steiger, 1899), 23–29.

<sup>28</sup> On this episode, see Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 78–79.

<sup>29</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 80, 83.

der philosophischen Wissenschaften, which organizes the entire wealth of learning according to the structure of “the concept”. The main lesson of Trendelenburg’s later critique of Hegel, however, is that such a project is doomed to failure. This is for the very simple reason that philosophy cannot, by pure reason or sheer thinking alone, produce concrete content or spin material results out of itself. Although Trendelenburg would later become critical of Kant’s absolute distinction between the a priori and a posteriori, the form and content of experience,<sup>30</sup> he always insisted on Kant’s point that the content or material of knowledge must be given to us in experience. As he later so graphically put it in the *Logische Untersuchungen*: “Human thought lives from experience, and it dies of starvation if it has to dine on its own intestines.”<sup>31</sup>

After his promotion to *Ordinarius*, Trendelenburg returned to the theme of philosophy in his next inaugural lecture, *De Platonis Philebi consilio*, which he gave November 1, 1837.<sup>32</sup> This lecture is primarily an interpretation of Plato’s *Philebus*. According to Bratuscheck, part of it treats the role of philosophy and its place among the sciences.<sup>33</sup> In this part Trendelenburg declares that the task that Plato set for philosophy in the *Republic* should still be the ideal for philosophy today. Plato saw philosophy as “the guardian” of the sciences, where its job was to provide them with a solid foundation, to settle disputes between them, and to order them into a coherent whole. The special sciences need philosophy, because they have general presuppositions which fall outside their more limited purview, and because they come into conflict with one another. It will be forever the mission of philosophy to discover and examine these presuppositions, and to prevent conflicts between the special sciences. Trendelenburg sees all the sciences forming one grand temple for which the philosopher serves as the grand priest, setting the laws governing the whole. Trendelenburg also stressed the value of philosophy in guiding practical life. It was also the task of philosophy to lay down basic ethical values—a task falling completely outside the domain of the empirical sciences. Taking issue with the Hegelians, Trendelenburg went on to deny that philosophy always comes too late upon the scene, that it paints its gray upon gray only when an age grows old. Philosophy should strive to overcome the gap between theory and practice, speculation and action, and to do so it should again return to the classical past for its inspiration.

<sup>30</sup> *Logische Untersuchungen* II, 264–267.

<sup>31</sup> *Logische Untersuchungen* I, 109.

<sup>32</sup> *De Platonis Philebi consilio* (Berlin: Bethge, 1837). See the account in Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 84–88.

<sup>33</sup> In this respect Bratuscheck’s account differs from the published lecture. Bratuscheck is explicit that the lecture treats the “die Aufgabe und Bedeutung der Philosophie innerhalb der akademischen Studien,” 86. He then provides a detailed account of what Trendelenburg said on the matter, 86–88, though none of this appears in the published version, which is limited to a discussion of the contents and proper interpretation of the *Philebus*. It is implausible that Bratuscheck, who is otherwise very solid and reliable, simply invented this material. Either he had access to other materials that he read into the lecture, or the original lecture was indeed longer or different from the published version. In any case, the concept of philosophy Bratuscheck ascribes to Trendelenburg in this lecture is consistent with that expressed in passages from the *Logische Untersuchungen*.

If we place the conception of philosophy in *De Platonis philebi consilio* alongside the critique of Hegel, it seems that Trendelenburg's thinking is very much in flux, indeed that it lacks coherence. On the one hand, he is still attracted to the traditional Platonic conception of philosophy as the guardian of the sciences, as the foundational discipline that all the special sciences presuppose; on the other hand, he does not accept the Hegelian view that philosophy has the power to provide that foundation by means of pure thinking alone. If thinking gets its content or material from experience, as he complained against Hegel, then it would seem that philosophy depends on the results of the empirical sciences. So rather than providing a foundation for the empirical sciences, philosophy should get its foundation from them. The tension is striking. Somehow, it seemed, philosophy both grounds yet presupposes the sciences. Trendelenburg's mature conception of philosophy as it appears in the *Logische Untersuchungen* would be a solution to this dilemma.

But in 1837 Trendelenburg still had no solution to it. In *De Platonis Philibi consilio* he still clung, despite his critique of Hegel, to the Platonic conception of philosophy as the foundation of the sciences. Still, the seeds of his mature views were already planted. For in his early lectures Trendelenburg saw one part of philosophy as especially crucial to its role as a comprehensive and foundational discipline of all the sciences: logic. Logic contains the common principles of all the particular sciences, so that it, more than any other part of philosophy, fulfills the role of a foundational discipline. So, to be true to his conception of philosophy, Trendelenburg would have to devote himself to logic. It was indeed for just this reason that he had focused upon logic in his 1835 lectures, which he had originally described as "first philosophy".<sup>34</sup> He then gave lectures on logic every semester. Apparently, it was first in 1837 that he expressed the wish to write a book on logic.<sup>35</sup> For the next three years he labored on that book, which finally bore fruit in 1840 as the *Logische Untersuchungen*. It was with this work, which contains the core of his logic and metaphysics, that Trendelenburg would make his name and claim to posterity. To its contents we must now turn.

<sup>34</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 80.

<sup>35</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 88.



# Logic and Metaphysics

## 1. A Philosophical Revolution

Trendelenburg's mature conception of philosophy makes its debut in the first edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen*. This conception is of the first historical importance, marking a break with the then prevalent conception of the speculative idealist tradition. Reversing that tradition's view that the foundation of the empirical sciences lies in philosophy, Trendelenburg insisted that the foundation of philosophy rests on the empirical sciences. According to Klaus Köhnke, Trendelenburg's re-orientation of philosophy was "the beginning of the history of modern epistemology and philosophy of science, which finds its first summit in neo-Kantianism."<sup>1</sup> While this remark has to be put in a broader context, which we will soon supply, it still contains an important element of truth.

Trendelenburg's new conception of philosophy appears immediately in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, in the preface, introduction and first chapter. We learn there that philosophy should become "a theory of the science" (*Wissenschaftstheorie*), whose task is to understand the methods and presuppositions of the sciences (11).<sup>2</sup> Like all the sciences, logic, which is the foundational discipline of philosophy, has to ponder its own facts, which are nothing less than "the methods of the special sciences" (iv). Since the special sciences are more concerned with their subject matter, they do not reflect upon their methods; it is the task of logic, then, to bring these methods to self-consciousness and to analyze their underlying structure. Philosophy must recognize, as Trendelenburg later puts it in a redolent phrase, "the fact of science" (I, 130–1). Science is a fact because it is now a reality, a *fait accompli*, so that it is pointless to discuss its mere possibility. The sciences have proven themselves because they have been successful, providing indisputable results, which in itself is a sufficient rebuttal against skepticism. If philosophers only recognize this fact, Trendelenburg believes, they will realize that it is pointless to provide the sciences with a foundation grounded in privileged first principles, methods or intuitions. It was the mistake of philosophy in the past, we are told, that it began from some intuition of the whole and then tried to explain all particulars from it. We should do just the opposite. Rather than starting

<sup>1</sup> Köhnke, *Neukantianismus*, 23.

<sup>2</sup> All references to the *Logische Untersuchungen* are, unless otherwise noted, to the third and final edition, Leipzig: Hirzel, 1870). The volume is designated by a Roman numeral, the page with an Arabic numeral.

from the idea of the whole, we should begin from the parts and then gradually ascend to the whole. The “logical investigations” will follow just this method, first going through the entire series of logical questions and then striving to attain “a view of the whole science” (I, 3).

Yet, as eager as Trendelenburg was to stress the dependence of philosophy on the empirical sciences, he also wanted to ensure its independence. The old Platonic conception of philosophy as the guardian of the sciences is still very much with him. Somehow, there had to be a middle ground between the traditional conception of philosophy, which made it the guardian of the sciences, and the positivist conception, which made it simply their servant. In chapter XXII of the *Untersuchungen*, “Das System”, Trendelenburg explains what this middle ground would be. As a theory of the sciences, he tells us, philosophy is stuck in an apparent predicament: it has *to follow* the sciences because it receives its material from them; but it also has *to lead* them because it shows their basis and organization (II, 453–454). Thus philosophy seems caught in a circle: it both leads and follows, grounds and presupposes, the special sciences. The solution to the dilemma, Trendelenburg claims, is for philosophy to reflect upon and develop the principles *already embodied in the practice* of the sciences. It should not legislate new or higher principles for the sciences but raise to self-consciousness the principles and methods they already use and presuppose (II, 454–455). Since it formulates principles the sciences simply presuppose, it does not merely follow them; and since these principles are already implicit in the sciences, it does not exactly lead them either. Ultimately, though, the empirical sciences remain the matter for philosophical reflection: “Logic and metaphysics do not anticipate the philosophical disciplines but fall back on the empirical ones.”<sup>3</sup>

It is here that Trendelenburg reveals the Aristotelian dimension of his conception of philosophy. Philosophy must see the universal in the particular, the logic involved in the special sciences, and not attempt to flee particulars to find some higher ground above them.

Throughout the *Logische Untersuchungen* the classical aspects of Trendelenburg’s conception of philosophy are no less salient than the modern ones. They appear especially conspicuously in chapter I, ‘Logik und Metaphysik als grundlegende Wissenschaft’, where he went to most pains to explain his conception of philosophy (I, 4–14). It immediately becomes clear that the re-orientation of philosophy around the empirical sciences does not mean for Trendelenburg, as it later would for the neo-Kantians, that philosophy should be primarily epistemology. For Trendelenburg continues to see philosophy as metaphysics, i.e., as knowledge of the universe as a whole. This metaphysics would be first and foremost a general system or encyclopedia of the sciences. Hence Trendelenburg writes that philosophy arises from the striving for knowledge of the whole universe (5). The special sciences, viz., physics, chemistry or biology,

<sup>3</sup> In Trendelenburg’s suggestive and intranslatable German: “Die Logik und Metaphysik greifen also nicht in die philosophischen Disciplinen vor, sondern in die empirischen zurück” (II, 454).

each deal with some part or aspect of the universe; but this does not satisfy philosophy, which wants to know the universe as whole. In a striking Platonic formulation, Trendelenburg states that philosophy is “the science of the idea” (*Wissenschaft der Idee*), where the idea determines the whole in its parts, the universal in the particular. The highest idea, which is the foremost goal of philosophy, is that of the universe as a whole.

It becomes plain from chapter I that Trendelenburg’s conception of philosophy is very far from that of the positivists. Though Trendelenburg is not reacting explicitly to positivism, which would become a potent force in Germany only in the 1850s, some passages read as if they were a deliberate repudiation of it. While Comte held that the sciences would eventually replace philosophy, which was only primitive metaphysics, Trendelenburg insists upon the very opposite: that far from being dispensable, philosophy is necessary for the sciences. Though the special sciences all claim autonomy, they cannot really achieve it; their claim to self-sufficiency is delusory because they have tacit presuppositions, unexamined basic concepts and borrowed principles (I, 4). The sciences need philosophy for another reason: they come into conflict with one another, and they cannot settle their disputes on their own. This is where philosophy proves indispensable. It uncovers and examines the presuppositions, concepts and principles behind the special sciences, and it resolves the conflicts between them by showing how all their results form a coherent whole (I, 7–8). It is indeed only when we ascend to the higher philosophical standpoint and have some grasp of the whole of things, Trendelenburg believes, that we will have a better understanding of the parts and particulars of the empirical sciences.

True to the Platonic tradition, Trendelenburg believes that knowledge forms an organic whole, and that the striving for a system reflecting that whole is integral to philosophy. A complete and final system is for him, however, only an ideal, a goal that we can approach but never attain. We could produce the perfect system of all the sciences, he argues, only if we could know the entire universe, which, of course, is impossible. We could know the entire universe only if we, like the infinite mind, could create it (I, 6). We are finite intellects, however, for whom the world is only given. We cannot proceed like the infinite mind from the whole to its parts, but have to proceed from the parts to the whole. We have to realize that, even after our utmost labors in gradually adding part upon part, we will at best only approach the concept or outline of the whole. Thus the idea of the complete system of the sciences lies in an infinite distance from us, and stands before us only as aspiration (I, 6). In thus stressing the necessary yet regulative status of his system, Trendelenburg reveals the influence of the romantics upon him. Friedrich Schlegel epitomized this view in his famous dictum that a system is both necessary and impossible.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Schlegel, *Fragmente, Athenaeum*, I (1798), 191: “It is equally fatal for the spirit to have a system and not to have one. So it must decide to combine both” *Kritische Ausgabe*, II, 174.

Having now considered both sides of Trendelenburg's conception of philosophy, its modern and classical aspects, we might still wonder how they fit together. While the idea of philosophy as a comprehensive system of the special sciences goes in the direction of metaphysics, which would make nature itself the central concern of philosophy, the idea of philosophy as the logic of the sciences moves in the direction of epistemology, which would make *knowledge* of nature the major interest of philosophy. So we are left with the question: what is the chief business of philosophy, metaphysics or epistemology? This is the difference between first-order enquiry into nature as a whole or second-order enquiry into the conditions of the knowledge of nature.

Trendelenburg attempts to resolve this tension in chapter I of the *Untersuchungen*. There are two parts to philosophy, he says, corresponding to two aspects of each science. On the one hand, each science has a special *object* or *subject matter*, which is one part of being as such. On the other hand, each science has a special *method*, which is one part of thinking as such. That part of philosophy that deals with being as such is *metaphysics*, while that part that concerns thinking as such is *logic* (I, 6). Although Trendelenburg thus makes metaphysics and logic equal parts of philosophy, he still thinks they are only its parts and do not exhaust its fundamental concern. That concern is not simply with being alone or with thinking alone but with how thinking corresponds with or conforms to being in the act of knowledge. There must be, therefore, another higher science which determines how we have knowledge of being. That science will be "a science of science", because its task will be to determine how science is possible. It will then incorporate logic and metaphysics because it will determine how thinking, which is the object of logic, corresponds with being, which is the object of metaphysics. This science of science will be philosophy in the true and proper sense. Trendelenburg calls it "logic in its wider sense", "the foundation science" or "*philosophia fundamentalis*" (I, 14). The logic of the *Logische Untersuchungen* is conceived in just this sense.

Clearly, this conception of philosophy goes back to the Kantian-Fichtean tradition. Trendelenburg is making the problem of knowledge into the central concern of first philosophy, just as it had been for Kant and Fichte before him. He poses this problem in very Kantian terms: "How is the knowledge of science possible?" Indeed, the very term "science of science" is an allusion to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. In the end, then, it would seem that Trendelenburg's conception of philosophy is more epistemological than metaphysical, that the modern conception of philosophy trumps the classical one. What other conclusion can there be, given that his fundamental science deals with an essentially epistemological problem?

Yet this apparent bias toward epistemology is soon corrected in the course of Trendelenburg's logical investigations. For it turns out that the answer to the epistemological problem comes from metaphysics. Metaphysics, for Trendelenburg, ultimately trumps epistemology because it alone provides the solution to the problem of the possibility of knowledge. To understand why this is so, we now need to turn to his metaphysics proper.

## 2. The Organic Worldview

Nothing better reveals the conservative character of Trendelenburg's thought than his statement in the preface to the second edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen* that the Germans have to cure themselves of their constant quest for new philosophical principles (I, ix). There is no need to search for the new principles of "the philosophy of the future", he writes in a snide reference to Feuerbach,<sup>5</sup> because the basic principles of philosophy have already been found long ago. These principles lie in what Trendelenburg calls the "organic worldview", a worldview formulated by Plato and Aristotle. This worldview is as valid today as it was in fifth-century Athens, and to establish its enduring validity it is only necessary to bring it into connection with the modern sciences.

The phrase "organic worldview" sums up well Trendelenburg's entire philosophy. He often uses this phrase to describe his general position. But he always understood it as more than just *his* philosophy. The organic worldview was the *philosophia perennis*, the single eternal philosophy persisting throughout the ages and implicit in all systems. Trendelenburg saw it as his mission to preserve and protect this legacy amid all the materialism of the modern age.

Whence this "organic worldview"? Where did it originate, and what does it mean? The origin of the idea, and its basic meaning, can be traced back to Plato, who in the *Timaeus* described the entire world as "a living being with soul and intelligence" (I, 30b), or as "a single visible living being" (30d). Behind Plato's metaphor there lay two closely connected theses: first, that everything in nature is animated, suffused with life, so that it is not simply inert matter; and, second, that nature as a whole is governed by ends or purposes, an intelligent design, so that it is not just a meaningless "concourse of atoms". If we put both these ideas together, we get the concept of nature as a single vast organism, one giant *macroanthropos*. Both of these ideas were revived and recast in modernized form in the *Logische Untersuchungen*.

Though Trendelenburg would constantly refer to Plato and Aristotle as the sources for the organic worldview, it is not from them that he first learned about it. Before he began his studies of classical philosophy in Leipzig in 1824, he would have heard about it probably sometime in 1823, from the lectures of his teacher in Kiel, Johann Erich von Berger. Berger was an enthusiastic student of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, which had attempted to revive the classical ideas of Plato about nature. The young Schelling was an admirer of Plato's *Timaeus*, and even wrote in his early years a commentary upon it; it is not going too far to say that this was the inspiration for his *Naturphilosophie*.<sup>6</sup> Thus Schelling was the ultimate source of Trendelenburg's

<sup>5</sup> Trendelenburg was referring to Feuerbach's *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft* (Zurich: Fröbel, 1843), which had appeared after the first edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen*.

<sup>6</sup> On the early Schelling's relationship to Platonism, see Michael Franz, *Schellings Tübinger Platon-Studien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

knowledge of the organic worldview. Though Trendelenburg would often take issue with Schelling in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, he still had major debts to him, however indirect.

What rationale can there possibly be for rehabilitating such a quaint metaphysics? *Prima facie* it would seem that the burden of proof rests heavily upon Trendelenburg; for going back to the ancients seems utterly opposed to the spirit of modern science, so much of which came from a reaction against ancient cosmology. The organic worldview seems to hark back to an older and more primitive anthropocentric view of the universe, the very kind laid to rest long ago by Copernicus and Galileo. Here we encounter one of the basic ironies of Trendelenburg's thought: though he demands re-orienting philosophy around the new empirical sciences, he insists on going back to Plato and Aristotle!

To understand Trendelenburg's rationale for the organic worldview, we first have to reconstruct some of the context behind it. Trendelenburg himself does not fully explain the rationale behind his metaphysics in the *Logische Untersuchungen*. What he takes for granted is the result of an historical development not apparent to his reader. It is important to realize that the movement toward the rehabilitation of organic doctrine took place well before Trendelenburg, who with Lotze was only one of its last representatives. To understand this organic worldview, then, we have to go back in history and set forth the basic logical and historical stages of its development in the late 1790s and early 1800s. The more we see of its genesis and context, the less it seems like hopeless fantasy; indeed, it seems even plausible, or, to use Plato's language in the *Timaeus*, "a likely story" (29d).

The organic worldview, as formulated by Schelling in the late 1790s and early 1800s, was essentially a reaction against Cartesian physics. It was indeed the direct antithesis of the Cartesian worldview, which, for more than a century, had represented the spirit of early modern science. While the organic worldview is dynamic, monistic, and teleological, the Cartesian worldview is static, dualistic and mechanistic. A greater "paradigm shift" can hardly be imagined! To understand such a dramatic reversal, we will focus on each aspect of the organic worldview: its dynamism, monism, and organicism.

The dynamism of the organic worldview had its sources in Kant and Fichte. Whether in the realm of psychology or physics, Kant and Fichte replaced the static substances of Cartesian metaphysics with dynamic forces or activities. Things now had to be understood not in terms of what they are, their permanent essences, but in terms of what they do, their actions or movements. Kant had struck the first blow for this dynamic concept of nature when he argued in his *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften* that matter consists not in extension but in the interaction between the forces of attraction and repulsion. This theory would then be developed in a radical direction by Schelling and Eschenmeyer, who maintained that all the specific differences in kinds of matter are due to their varying densities, which can be explained by the different ratios of their inherent forces.

What Kant had done in the realm of nature Fichte would do in the realm of the mind. In his 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre* Fichte had taken to its limit a concept of the mind that appears implicitly in Kant's first *Kritik*: that the mind is not a passive receptor but an active instrument, shaping and transforming the data of the senses. For Fichte, the mind is essentially activity, and nothing more than that; it is not an entity that acts but activity itself, the forms and ways of its acting in the world. Although Kant had done much to prepare the way for this dynamic view of mind in his Paralogisms by criticizing the rationalist theory of the soul, there were still lingering elements of hypostasis in his own account of mind; for he continued to conceive of the self as an unknowable thing-in-itself behind its activities. It was Fichte's mission to remove this last vestige of hypostasis in the Kantian doctrine. The self is not an unknowable entity behind the conditions of experience but nothing more than the product of its own activity; in short, it is only what it "posits" or makes itself to be.

Although Kant and Fichte made a great step toward the organic worldview in securing its dynamism, they were also far from it in at least one important respect. Namely, they were dualists. They accepted, in one form or another, a dualism between the intellectual and empirical, the formal and the sensible. While the old Cartesian dualism between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* had disappeared simply because there were no things or substances anymore, it was replaced by another dualism no less drastic: that between the rational and sensible, the active and passive. Kant and Fichte had greatly extended the powers of the mind, the range and reach of its activity, so that the *form* of experience, its universal and necessary *structure*, is its own creation; but the empirical world, the material of sensation, what is received by the senses, remained a mere given. Fichte went further than Kant in attempting to surmount this dualism and to limit the empirical realm. The titanic Fichtean ego strives to bring the entire empirical world under its control, to make it conform to its rational ends, so that it is the product of its own activity. But this purely ideal world is for Fichte only a goal, an infinite task, which the striving of the ego can approach but never attain. Fichte's famed absolute ego, which is supposed to create all of reality from itself, is not a constitutive principle but really only a regulative ideal. Fichte fully recognized that we are finite beings who live in a world that we will never entirely create. And so the dualism between the intelligible and sensible, the rational and sensible, remains in Fichte as it does in Kant; it is a reduced dualism, one of degree rather than kind, but a dualism all the same.

It is a point often stressed—and rightly so—that the Kantian-Fichtean dualisms were a stumbling block for the post-Kantian generation. They were indeed much more of a problem than the horrible Kantian thing-in-itself, which was quickly dismissed as an inconceivability. The dualisms, however, were harder to think away, not least because they seemed to express a fundamental fact of experience: that we are finite creatures who cannot entirely create our world. Still, the young Schelling, Hölderlin and Hegel could not live with them, and for perfectly good reasons. In their view, there were two basic problems with these dualisms. First, they posed limits

to natural or historical explanation, placing the mind in a supersensible or noumenal sphere beyond the realms of history and nature. Second, they forbade the solution to the very epistemic problem that Kant had made it his mission to solve: the possibility of knowledge, or, more specifically, how a priori concepts, which originate in the mind, apply to a manifold of sense, which is simply given to us. To explain the possibility of knowledge, Kant had postulated the most intimate interaction between understanding and sensibility; but his dualism seemed to render that interaction completely mysterious. Notoriously, Kant had refused to speculate about the origins of this interaction, which left the entire possibility of knowledge a mystery.

Because of these problems, monism became the crucial philosophical desideratum of the first post-Kantian generation. One of the first to take the step toward monism was Schelling. It was his great insight that the activities of the mind discovered by Fichte, and the activities of matter analyzed by Kant, are really ultimately one and the same; in other words, the forces by which the mind creates its world are the same as the forces that create matter itself. Schelling simply added together Kant's dynamism of matter with Fichte's dynamism of mind to form a single dynamic conception of the world. Mind and matter, the formal and material, are now simply different manifestations or appearances of a single creative activity. The intellectual or mental is its rational or conscious form, the empirical or physical is its subrational or subconscious form. As Schelling put the idea in the introduction to his *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*: "Nature will be visible spirit, spirit invisible nature."<sup>7</sup>

Of course, it is one thing to say that mind and matter are one, and quite another to specify how in clear and definite philosophical terms. The most protean and restless of philosophical spirits, Schelling could not decide exactly how to formulate his monism. In his 1800 *System des transcendentalen Idealismus* he had stated his monism as a basic principle; but he still had not given it a definite and systematic form.<sup>8</sup> For that Schelling had a clear model standing before him, a seductive and bewitching precedent. That model was "the holy spurned Spinoza". In his *Ethica* Spinoza had developed a unique form of monism by conceiving thought and extension as two attributes of one and the same substance. "The order and connection of ideas is one and the same as the order and connection of things" he declared,<sup>9</sup> because the mental and physical are different properties of one and the same thing. Schelling came very close to adopting this Spinozian monism in his 1801 *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*. For there he saw the absolute in terms of substance—he called the absolute "*das An-sich*" in reference to the third definition of part one of the *Ethica*<sup>10</sup>—and he

<sup>7</sup> Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. K.F.A. Schelling (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–61), II, 56.

<sup>8</sup> Schelling, "Begriff der Transcendental-Philosophie", §1 of *System des transcendentalen Idealismus*, *Werke* III, 339–342.

<sup>9</sup> Spinoza, *Ethica*, Pars secunda, Propositio VII: "Ordo, et connexio idearum idem est, ac ordo, et connexio rerum."

<sup>10</sup> Pars Prima, Definitione III: "Per substantiam intelligo id, quod in se est, et per se concipitur; hoc est id, cuius conceptus non indiget conceptu alterius rei, a quo formari debeat."



conceived this substance, much like Spinoza, as an eternal and purely self-identical being. Schelling's adoption of Spinoza in the 1801 *Darstellung* is all the more patent from his exposition, which imitates the geometric method.

Yet, as Schelling was soon to discover, and as Hegel would later remind him, there was something deeply problematic about Spinoza's monism, something that did not sit well with someone having a Kantian-Fichtean background. For one thing, Spinoza's single infinite substance is static and eternal; it remains forever the same and changes no more than the eternal truths of geometry. Such a static worldview scarcely jibes, however, with the dynamic conception of nature that Schelling had inherited from Kant and that he had so staunchly defended in his *Naturphilosophie* in the late 1790s. In his writings from those years Schelling had insisted tirelessly that nature is productivity, that it is ceaseless creativity, and that it would be hypostasis to conceive it as if it were a substance. More importantly, though, Spinoza's monism is problematic because it does not explain the origin of finitude. Spinoza's single infinite substance is eternal, and it is all reality, so that everything that exists is only its part or mode. But if that is so, how do we explain the origin of time, the ceaseless changes that go on in the empirical world? And if substance is one and indivisible, how do we account for the apparent division of the world into many separate finite things? How, indeed, do we explain the origin of the difference between thought and extension? Spinoza had little answer to these thorny questions, and because of them his elegant and stately system came to grief. These questions were, however, the crucial starting points for the first post-Kantian generation. No one had seen this and said it better than Schelling himself, who, in his 1795 *Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus*, claimed that the fundamental problem of philosophy was to explain the origin of finitude.<sup>11</sup> So when Schelling declared in his *Darstellung meines Systems* that the absolute could not go outside itself—that the self-same absolute could not become different than itself—he had virtually closed his eyes to his own problem. In the late 1790s and early 1800s Hölderlin and Hegel would remind him of his original problem; their reminders did not fall on deaf ears; and so, throughout the early 1800s, Schelling would continue to struggle with it, though never firmly and finally resting with any of his answers.

Hölderlin and Hegel were themselves groping toward another formulation for monism, one that would avoid the problems generated by Spinoza. Their formulation goes back to some of Schelling's original ideas and pushes them to their final conclusion. Schelling had always understood that the single infinite activity that expresses itself in the subjective and objective has to be understood in organic terms. In his 1798 *Von der Weltseele* he goes back to the crucial metaphor of the *Timaeus* and sees the productivity of nature as the activity of life itself. It was in the idea of life, the concept of an organism, or the notion of living force, that Schelling saw the solution to the problems of dualism, whether Kantian and Fichtean or Spinozian. These ideas mediate

<sup>11</sup> Schelling, *Werke* I, 294, 310, 313.

between the subjective and objective, thought and extension, because they are only different degrees of development and organization of living force. The subjective realm is the highest degree of organization and development of this force, which is life in its self-conscious and active manifestation; and the objective realm is the lowest degree of organization and development of this force, which is life in its subconscious and dormant manifestation. More significantly, we can now avoid Spinoza's problem of explaining the origin of the finite. For if we conceive of the single infinite reality as living force, as one vast organism, we can explain the generation of the finite as the self-differentiation and growth of this organism. Just as organisms grow from the inchoate, potential and amorphous into the organized, actualized and structured, so the universe does the same. There is no more a dualism between the infinite and the finite than there is between the egg and the chick, the acorn and the oak. And so it became a crucial desideratum for the first post-Kantian generation to vitalize Spinoza's substance, to see it as something living, moving and evolving rather than something dead, static and forever the same. The call for a vitalistic Spinozism goes back to Herder; and it will recur in Schelling, Hölderlin, Hegel, Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel and, ultimately, Trendelenburg himself.

Such, very crudely, were the steps by which the first post-Kantian generation replaced the static, dualistic and mechanistic worldview of Cartesianism with the dynamic, monistic and organic worldview of neo-Platonism. There can be no doubt that these were very bold and speculative steps, and that they were made more on the wings of imagination than the crutches of logic. The organic conception was, after all, a metaphor. But it would be a mistake to dismiss it as mere poetic fancy. The organic worldview was revived because it seemed the only way to solve the philosophical problems engendered by dualism and mechanism. In the 1790s there could be no going back to the Kantian worldview, which was too dualistic, and still less to the static, dualistic and mechanical worldview of Descartes, which seemed as out of tune with science as it was problematic for philosophy. The next step forward could only be how to formulate the organic worldview in a more rigorous and precise form. This was the problem for Hegel and the whole generation of *Naturphilosophen* after Schelling, for Steffans, Eschenmeyer, Oken, Ritter, and, last but not least, Trendelenburg's teacher, von Berger.

Trendelenburg inherited all these philosophical developments of his predecessors. He retraced the very steps by which Schelling, Hölderlin and Hegel were led to the organic worldview in the early 1800s. When Trendelenburg wrote the *Logische Untersuchungen* in the late 1830s most of these steps would have been long forgotten; and so he needed to relive them to rationalize his own metaphysics. Thus he champions an essentially dynamic, monistic and teleological metaphysics, essentially for the same reasons as his great forbears. In his main discussion of Spinoza, his *Über Spinoza's Grundgedanke und sein Erfolg*, we find him rejecting Spinoza's monism on the same grounds as Hegel and Hölderlin. But, as we shall soon see, Trendelenburg did not simply revisit the past; he had to reformulate these arguments in a new context to address the challenges of the 1830s.

### 3. The Metaphysics of Motion

Along with the organic worldview, there is another basic idea running throughout Trendelenburg's metaphysics, one often regarded as the signature theme of the *Logische Untersuchungen*. This is the concept of motion or movement (*Bewegung*), which Trendelenburg expressly made the fundamental principle of his metaphysics. The concept of motion is the basis for his epistemology, his theory of mathematics, his deduction of the categories, and his views on space, time and matter. Accordingly, most of volume I of the *Logische Untersuchungen* is devoted to an exposition of this principle and the reasons for introducing it into metaphysics.

But why motion? *Prima facie* it seems odd to give such metaphysical importance to it. Our ordinary intuitions give motion a secondary place in our everyday ontology. We limit motion to external nature, to the spatial realm, and we define it as change of place. It therefore seems decidedly derivative, the product of more basic concepts, such as space, time and matter. We should be wary, however, of resting too much on these intuitions, which might not be as neutral and self-evident as they appear. Arguably, they are infected by dualism, so that we attribute motion to physical bodies alone; or they are influenced by modern mechanics, so that we conceive motion as only change of place and extrinsic to matter. In such cases to rely on them would be to beg metaphysical questions.

Trendelenburg was not, of course, the only philosopher to give such importance to motion. Hobbes, for one, made it fundamental, the chief cause of all things.<sup>12</sup> But Hobbes does not really help us to understand Trendelenburg, who was a bitter opponent of materialism. Trendelenburg and Hobbes have indeed opposing conceptions of motion: Hobbes distinguishes matter from motion whereas Trendelenburg reduces matter to motion; and Hobbes thinks that motion is directed strictly by mechanical causes while Trendelenburg holds that it is also governed by final causes. Simply affirming the omnipotence and omnipresence of motion is by no means a distinguishing feature of an ontology. Everything depends on exactly *how* motion is understood.

All the oddness of giving such importance to motion disappears—and the characteristic features of Trendelenburg's concept of motion emerge—once we place his concept in the context of his organic worldview. Trendelenburg understands motion not simply as change of place but as the realization of potentiality, the coming-into-being of the form of a thing. More specifically, it is the actualization of purpose, the activity by which something realizes its purpose or end. As such,

<sup>12</sup> See Hobbes, *De Corpore* VI, 5: "But the causes of universal things...are manifest of themselves...for they have all but one universal cause, which is motion...and motion cannot be understood to have any other cause besides motion..." in *Human Nature and De Corpore Politico*, ed. J.C.A. Gaskin (Oxford: OUP, 1994), 197. Of course, Trendelenburg would argue that Hobbes did not take even motion far enough, because he retains a static conception of matter. In other respects, however, Hobbes similarities with Trendelenburg are striking. Both have a similar conception of mathematics as a branch of kinematics. On Hobbes' conception of mathematics as motion, see Richard Peters *Hobbes* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956), 81–82.

motion is the creative activity of life itself, the basic reality behind the dynamic, monistic and vitalistic worldview.

The chief source of inspiration for Trendelenburg's concept of motion was Aristotle. The great Stagirite had given motion the greatest importance in his philosophy, so that it was much more than mere change of place, and much more than an extrinsic property of matter. It seemed as if the dynamic worldview of Kant and Schelling already lay implicit in his writings. In the *Physics* Aristotle had defined nature itself as "a principle of motion and change" (III, 1; 200b). If he had also defined nature as "a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest" (II, 1; 192b), which seems to make rest as fundamental as motion, it quickly becomes clear that he regards motion as more fundamental than rest. For in Book VIII, 3, we learn that, though rest is as natural as motion, "motion is nevertheless the characteristic fact of nature" (253b). Motion is more basic than rest because rest is simply "the privation of motion", meaning that if things are at rest that is because some prior motion puts them to rest (VIII, 1; 251a). Aristotle goes on to argue in *Physics* VIII, 1 that motion is omnipresent and incessant: "...there never *was* a time when there was not motion, and there never *will be* a time when there is not motion" (252b). To explain anything naturally for Aristotle is to explain it in terms of motion. We understand why something changes or moves, or why it is at rest, through some prior motion (VIII, 1; 251a-b). To appreciate the Aristotelian influence on Trendelenburg we also have to keep in mind Aristotle's broad conception of motion and physics. Aristotle understood motion as much more than change of place. Motion comprises all forms of change, viz., not only change of place, but also growth or qualitative change, substantial change, coming into being and passing away.<sup>13</sup> And physics is for Aristotle much more than the study of matter. Physics is understood as "the science of things that change".<sup>14</sup> This means that physics includes not only biology, which deals with the changes or motions characteristic of living organisms, but also psychology, which deals with the changes or motions characteristic of living things having the power of reason.<sup>15</sup>

There is a problem, it seems, in ascribing such importance to Aristotle's influence on Trendelenburg. For when he does comment on Aristotle's explicit definition of motion, Trendelenburg explicitly rejects it. In *Physics* III,1 Aristotle had defined motion as "The actualization of what exists potentially, in so far as it exists potentially." (201a) Trendelenburg took issue with this definition in the *Logische Untersuchungen* on the grounds that the concepts of actuality and potentiality are less primitive than motion itself, and indeed need to be defined through it (I, 153). Potentiality made no sense, for example, unless it was understood as a direction toward something, and

<sup>13</sup> *De Anima* I, 3; 406a.

<sup>14</sup> See *Meteorologica* I, 1, where the subject matter of physics is "all natural motion" (1025b). See also *Metaphysics* VI, 1: "...physics must be a theoretical science, but it will theorize about such being as admits of being moved" (1025b).

<sup>15</sup> See John Herman Randall, *Aristotle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 165: "...for Aristotle living and knowing are the most complex and developed forms of change and motion".

so as a motion. Yet it would be wrong to see this objection as deriving from a deeper disagreement with Aristotle. What Trendelenburg objects to is the wording of the definition, not the concept behind it. Hence he insists that Aristotle himself was not satisfied with the definition. The deeper problem with it, Trendelenburg thinks, is that it does not capture Aristotle's fundamental thought: that motion involves the realization of purpose.<sup>16</sup>

Besides Aristotle, the other major thinker to influence Trendelenburg's concept of motion was Kant. The Kantian influence is by no means confined to the dynamic conception of matter in the *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe*. Just as important to Trendelenburg's insight into the fundamental role of motion was the Kantian theory of mathematics, according to which mathematical proof consists in construction.<sup>17</sup> For Trendelenburg, the construction of a concept is essentially a form of inner motion. Apparently, it was the Kantian theory of construction that convinced Trendelenburg that motion applied to the inner realm of the mind as much as the outer realm of matter. If Aristotle showed him the primacy of motion in the outer world, it was Kant who showed him its primacy in the inner world. Although Trendelenburg reveals little about Kant's influence upon him in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, in a later essay he cites many passages from the first *Kritik* that show how motion is necessary for the representation of space and time, and how space and time are constructed through the representation of motion.<sup>18</sup> Since Trendelenburg had studied Kant long before the *Logische Untersuchungen*, it is plausible that these passages influenced him in developing his theory and were not simply the discovery of a happy coincidence *post facto*.

Whatever the influences on Trendelenburg, the crucial question remains: Why give primacy to motion? What is the philosophical rationale for such a bold metaphysical thesis? To defend such a claim was a task of a very tall order, especially in the 1830s. For Trendelenburg was in effect indulging in what Kant had declared to be impossible: metaphysics. He made the strongest claims in behalf of motion: that it applies to not simply appearances but reality in itself; that it explains not merely things in experience but reality as a whole. Clearly, then, Trendelenburg had some explaining to do. The justification of motion would involve nothing less than the vindication of metaphysics itself.

Trendelenburg's strategy for the rehabilitation of his metaphysics was to show how only its concept of motion could resolve the outstanding problems of Kant's epistemology. This strategy was a neat reversal of the Kantian legacy, whose critique of the faculty of knowledge had shown metaphysics to be impossible. Rather than using

<sup>16</sup> As Bratuscheck noted, *Trendelenburg*, 112.

<sup>17</sup> This point was noted by Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 108, 116.

<sup>18</sup> See "Ueber eine Lücke in Kants Beweis von der ausschliessende Subjektivität des Raumes und der Zeit", in *Historische Beiträge zur Philosophie* (Berlin: Bethge, 1867), III, 273–276. Trendelenburg cites KrV B 154, 165, 291.

epistemology as a weapon to undermine metaphysics, Trendelenburg would make it into an instrument to support it. There was nothing new or innovative about this strategy when Trendelenburg put it into place in the 1830s. For it was essentially the same strategy that Maimon, Schelling and Hegel had once used to vindicate their metaphysics in the early 1800s.

What made this new strategy still seem plausible for Trendelenburg in the 1830s, however, was the abiding predicament of Kantian epistemology. That predicament, which had become apparent to Maimon, Schelling and Hegel in the 1790s, seemed no closer to a resolution in the 1830s. The predicament was this: Kant could not explain the possibility of knowledge because of his underlying dualisms. The Kantian dualisms—whether between form and content, understanding and sensibility, noumena and phenomena, the intellectual and sensible—were simply too deep and drastic to explain the possibility of knowledge. That possibility presupposes some interaction or correspondence between these terms; but it is difficult to see how that is possible if they are so utterly distinct from one another. The Kantian problematic seemed as insoluble as it was familiar: it was a new version of Plato's problem of explaining the connection between the archetypal and ectypal world, or of Descartes' problem of explaining the interaction between the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa*. This predicament left an opening for Trendelenburg's Aristotelian metaphysics, whose great strength and advantage was its power to surmount these dualisms.

Trendelenburg implements this strategy chiefly in chapters IV and V of the *Logische Untersuchungen*. Here he introduces his metaphysics after a discussion of the problem of knowledge. That problem is explained very schematically but sufficiently clearly to see all that is at stake. How is knowledge possible if it presupposes some correspondence between thought and being when thought and being are so distinct from one another? The rationale Trendelenburg gives for his metaphysics is that it alone solves this problem. Only if we return to metaphysics and discover the primal principle of both thought and being, he argues, will we be in a position to explain the correspondence between thought and being presupposed in all knowledge. That principle is, of course, nothing less than the concept of motion. Motion is for Trendelenburg the fundamental source of both thought and being, and so the central concept to mediate the opposition between them. Almost all of the rest of volume I of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, chapters VI to VIII, will be an explanation and defense of this central principle. Our task now is to reconstruct Trendelenburg's argument.

Trendelenburg begins his argument by laying down the essential desiderata or necessary conditions for solving the problem of knowledge. His main thesis is that only his metaphysical theory satisfies these conditions. What philosophy needs to solve this problem, he explains, is a certain kind of activity (*Tätigkeit*) (I, 138). It is necessary to mediate the opposition between thinking and being, and mediation is an activity. A static or inert thing or property will not bring the opposed terms together but leave them as they stand in stark opposition to one another. This crucial premise to

Trendelenburg's argument is scarcely explained. Why, one might ask, is it necessary to have an activity to mediate the opposition between thinking and being? Why cannot there be some static and eternal substance that includes them both and resolves their opposition? With this premise Trendelenburg is already more than halfway toward his goal, for it seems there is little or no conceptual distance between an activity and movement. Yet the premise remains ungrounded.

Be that as it may, Trendelenburg now goes on to explain that this activity has to satisfy three basic requirements, three necessary conditions for the possibility of knowledge. First, it has to unify thinking and being; it has to create something in common between them, but in such a manner that it does justice to the reality of their difference. Second, it must be the first condition of all knowledge, such that all knowledge presupposes it and it does not presuppose any other knowledge (I, 139, 146). As the first condition of all knowledge, Trendelenburg further explains, it must be first not only in the order of being but also first in the order of knowledge. In other words, this first activity must be knowable as such, so that we *know* that it is the first condition of knowledge. This is an important and necessary stipulation, since in many things we distinguish the ground or cause of things, the *ratio essendi*, and the ground of cognition of them, the *ratio cognoscendi*; but the activity that explains the possibility of knowledge must be first *both* in order of knowledge and being. Third, this activity must be simple and not complex, i.e., it cannot be the composite or result of more simple elements (I, 140). If that were the case, then its elements would be the original or first condition of knowledge.

Movement satisfies the first condition, Trendelenburg argues, because it is the most fundamental and prevalent fact of all being (I, 141). As such it is common to thinking and being, and indeed omnipresent in them. Whatever exists moves, or at least strives to move; and it will move whenever opposing movements are removed. Trendelenburg's universe is much like that of Heraclitus: everything is in motion, and what appears to be at rest is really in motion. All rest in nature is really nothing more than an equipoise of motion (I, 141–142). We can explain rest by motion, as retarded or balanced motion, but we cannot explain motion by rest, because motion comes only from motion (I, 141–142). A central premise behind Trendelenburg's dynamic vision of the universe is his account of the essence of matter in chapter VII. There we learn that movement is not simply a property of matter, as if there were something that moves, a substance in which movement inheres; rather, movement is the very essence of matter, which consists in nothing more than forces of attraction and repulsion, the tendencies to move away from or toward other things. In reaching this conclusion Trendelenburg builds on Kant's dynamic analysis of matter in the *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften*, which analyzed matter into attractive and repulsive forces. Like Schelling, though, Trendelenburg believes that Kant did not take this argument to its ultimate conclusion. He still hypostasizes matter, as if it consists in an entity or substance in which these forces inhere. If, however, we further analyze the forces of attraction and repulsion, we see that they are essentially forms



of movement, movement of bodies toward or away from one another. Whatever the lingering habits of hypostasis in his language, it was a conclusion to which Kant himself was not adverse.<sup>19</sup>

Movement, Trendelenburg argues, is as fundamental to thinking as being (I, 142–143). Whenever we think of something we focus and concentrate upon it by virtue of activity, which is a form of movement. Since whatever we think of is also in movement (because movement is omnipresent in nature), movement is basic to both the activity and content of thought. Movement gives rise to perception by stimulating our senses; but it is also involved in the most abstract and formal activities of the mind. These activities consist in either uniting or distinguishing things. Whenever we unite things, we *move* them together; and whenever we distinguish them, we *move* them apart (I, 144–145). We explain things according to the principle of causality; but we think of causality as working by either a forward (cause to effect) or backward (effect to cause) motion (I, 145).

Having thus shown that movement satisfies the first condition, Trendelenburg now proceeds to show that it satisfies the second (I, 147–50). Any explanation of a phenomenon in nature presupposes movement, which we cannot explain away. We explain one motion by means of another, for example., the movement of a shaking tree from the movement of the wind, and the movement of the wind from the movements of cold and warm air. Each complex and particular movement is explained from a more simple and universal one (I, 148). All explanation in nature, Trendelenburg claims, is causal, where the cause is some prior motion and the effect another later one (I, 149). The general principle behind all explanation Trendelenburg sets forth more clearly in chapter VI: “Thinking, in its innermost drive, suffers no fixed given, nothing that stands opposed to it as a complete being; it has the task to make being into becoming, to lead the static back to its process of development. Only when we see a being in its process of becoming does the being cease to stare back at us, and only then is the obscure drawn into the light of awareness” (I, 220). The general principle that seems to be invoked here is that to understand something is to show it to be the product of a process of development, so that all understanding is genetic. Accepting this paradigm of explanation, we easily see that movement is both *causa essendi*, first in order of being, and *ratio cognoscendi*, first in order of knowledge.

Finally, Trendelenburg contends that movement satisfies the third condition, i.e., it is simple and basic, not complex and derived. Here, though, the argument becomes more difficult for him, because it seems as if we must explain movement in terms of more basic concepts. We analyze movement in terms of space and time, defining it by

<sup>19</sup> See Kant, “Vorrede”, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften*, *Schriften* IV, 476: “Die Grundbestimmung eines Etwas, das ein Gegenstand äußerer Sinne sein soll, mußte Bewegung sein...”, *Schriften* IV, 476. See also “Allgemeine Anmerkung zur Dynamik”: “Der Begriff der Materie wird auf lauter bewegende Kräfte zurückgeführt, welches man auch nicht anders erwarten konnte, weil im Raume keine Thätigkeit, keine Veränderung als bloß Bewegung gedacht werden kann.” *Schriften* IV, 524.



the change of place, by how much space it traverses within a certain time. Such definitions make space and time the more simple concepts, movement the more complex (I, 150–151). However, on closer inspection, Trendelenburg argues, it turns out that space and time are really the more complex concepts, for they show themselves to be explicable or definable only in terms of movement. We conceive time only in terms of a moving line, a point moving through space; and we conceive space as formed by the movement of points, lines and planes (I, 150–151). When we conceive of movement arising from the more basic components of time and space, that very process of generating movement is another more basic form of movement (I, 150–151). Whenever we attempt to define movement, Trendelenburg points out, we find that we presuppose movement, which is the telling sign of a truly primitive concept. Kant and Leibniz get caught in this unavoidable circle. Kant defines movement as the change in relations of a thing to a given space; and Leibniz defines it as a change in place.<sup>20</sup> They therefore assume change to be the more basic concept. But, Trendelenburg points out, change, i.e., the concept of something becoming different than it was, already involves that of movement, for we understand change as the result of movement (I, 152).

Such were, in sum, Trendelenburg's official arguments for his metaphysics of motion. With them, Trendelenburg believed that he had shown that motion is the most primitive concept of all, and that it is the essential mediating concept between the subjective and objective. For these reasons he believed it to be a concept sufficient to bridge the disastrous Kantian dualisms, and so to provide an explanation for the possibility of knowledge. According to his new metaphysics, the correspondence between the subjective and objective in knowledge arises from not a mysterious pre-established harmony between distinct entities, but it is entirely the product of motion within nature as a whole. Both subject and object are simply manifestations or forms of motion, and they can come together for the same reasons and according to the same laws as any other forms of motion. For this reason, Trendelenburg's epistemology has been described as naturalistic, though, for reasons we shall soon see, there is something misleading about that term given Trendelenburg's allegiance to final causes.

These official arguments were not, however, Trendelenburg's only arguments for his metaphysics of motion. Only in chapter VII of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, where he outlines his theory of mathematics, do we find the deeper rationale for his metaphysics. It becomes clear from this chapter that Trendelenburg thinks that only his metaphysics of motion can explain and justify one of the fundamental assumptions behind modern physics: that mathematics reveals the underlying structure of nature. Movement, Trendelenburg argues, is the source of number because number presupposes the idea of adding or subtracting units in time (I, 281). We conceive of any

<sup>20</sup> Trendelenburg cites Kant, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften*, *Schriften* IV, 482, "Erklärung 2" of Hauptstück 1, Phoronomie: "Bewegung eines Dinges ist die Veränderung der äußeren Verhältnisse desselben zu einem gegebenen Raum"; and Leibniz's April 1699 letter to Jacob Thomasius, Gerhardt, *Die philosophischen Schriften* I, 24: "Motus est Mutatio spatii."

determinate number by the movement that generates it, through how many units are added or subtracted to compose it. One, the basic unit of number, is a composite of a posited and cancelled activity or movement (I, 282). However we explain the origin of number, the fact remains that movement is conceivable in uniform and continuous units, so that we are able to measure it precisely. This is a sufficient guarantee, Trendelenburg thinks, for the application of mathematics to reality. Since movement is the very heart of reality, and since movement is measurable, reality itself is measurable (I, 236, 296, 357). Thus the middle term between mathematics and nature—what makes the former applicable to the latter—is nothing less than movement (I, 312).

It is clear from Trendelenburg's argument in chapters VI and VII of the *Untersuchungen* that he thinks *only* his metaphysics of motion can explain and justify the mathematization of nature. He contends that the chief competitors to his own theory of mathematics—the theories of Kant and Hegel—have, for very different reasons, ended up in undermining mathematization. The problem with Kant's theory is that it gives mathematics a subjective status, so that it ensures its validity only for appearances and not things-in-themselves (I, 311–312). Kant had argued that mathematics arises from the forms of intuition of space and time, and that these forms are a priori, arising from our own mental activity. While Trendelenburg thinks Kant's argument still leaves open the possibility that they are true of things-in-themselves, he still insists that Kant gives us no reason to think that they really are so (I, 160–166). All that he can guarantee is that they are true of appearances, reality as it appears to our senses. The difficulty with Hegel's theory is just the opposite of Kant's. Hegel gives mathematics more than subjective status and assumes that it applies to nature itself; however, he demotes mathematics by assigning it to the lower category of quantity, which deals only with the *externality* of nature. Mathematics, in Hegel's view, applies to merely the *extrinsic* properties of things; it has nothing to do with their *intrinsic* properties, which are purely qualitative. Trendelenburg thinks that it is the great advantage of his theory of mathematics that it avoids the problems with Kant's and Hegel's theories and shows that mathematics is true of the very essence of things, not simply its subjective appearances or its extrinsic properties.

It is with Trendelenburg's attempt to justify the mathematization of nature that we can see one of his deeper differences with Schelling's and Hegel's *Naturphilosophie*. Schelling and Hegel had conceived their *Naturphilosophie* as an antidote to Descartes' mechanical physics. Though Trendelenburg accepts their critique of Descartes's mechanism, he does not approve of one of the major consequences they drew from their critique. Schelling and Hegel were never able to separate the mathematization of nature from mechanism; the rejection of mechanism for them went hand-in-hand with a demotion of mathematics. While they did not deny the application of mathematics to nature, they insisted that it held only for its external appearances or extrinsic properties. Nature could be treated mathematically only insofar as it is a mechanism; and nature can be viewed as a mechanism only if we abstract from the processes that brought it into being. *Naturphilosophie* was meant to treat nature in its inner essence, in

its productivity or creativity, and never only as a product. Trendelenburg reverses this direction of thinking by making movement itself, the productive and creative side of nature, into something mathematical. On this basis he believed, it was possible to disarm the conflict between metaphysics and natural science, philosophy and mathematics. Kant, Schelling, and Hegel all went astray, Trendelenburg argues, in separating the methods of mathematics and philosophy. The method of philosophy and mathematics are essentially the same. When philosophy attempts to grasp the whole of things from an analysis of its parts, it proceeds in the same manner as the geometer who has the power to intuit the same relation or proportion amid different quantities (I, 318–319).

The importance that Trendelenburg gave to the mathematization of nature is already fully apparent in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, and it was indeed the most profound motivation behind his metaphysics of motion. We shall have occasion in a later section to confirm this interpretation when we examine Trendelenburg's infamous dispute with Fischer.<sup>21</sup> For the problem with Fischer, Trendelenburg believed, is that he could not see the importance of his metaphysics for the mathematization of nature.

Having provided a foundation for the mathematization of nature, Trendelenburg believed that he had all the justification he needed for his metaphysics. For his metaphysics of motion alone could explain the possibility of a mathematical knowledge of nature, which was the basic presupposition of the new natural sciences. Since his metaphysics was also essentially that of Aristotle, Trendelenburg was also convinced that he had all the justification necessary for his faith in the continuing relevance of ancient philosophy for the modern world. Yet there remained one outstanding stumbling block to Trendelenburg's case for a modern Plato and Aristotle: the hoary question of teleology. It is to that question that we must now turn.

#### 4. Defense of Teleology

We have seen so far, from our analysis of several chapters of volume I of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, that Trendelenburg has made motion the fundamental category of nature. It is crucial to see, however, that he regards motion only as a *necessary* condition for a full understanding of the world. It is still not a *sufficient* condition. Motion is a necessary condition in that it is the fundamental element or building block of everything that exists, whether in the mental or physical world; anything in the realms of thought or being will be the result of motion. Yet if we insist that the world consists in nothing more than motion—that it alone is a sufficient category to explain the world—then we are still on the level of materialism. After all, as we have seen, no one would have agreed more happily with Trendelenburg about the primacy of motion than Hobbes. But Hobbes stopped with motion; Trendelenburg insists that we move on from there. In the beginning of volume II of the *Logische Untersuchungen* he argues

<sup>21</sup> See Part I, chapter 6, sections 2 and 3 below.

that something more than motion is necessary to understand the world, and that something more is the concept of a purpose. This concept is crucial to the organic conception of the world, and it is what separates it from materialism or mechanism. Accordingly, the first three chapters of volume II are devoted to a defense of the category of purpose. We must now see how Trendelenburg defends teleology, the characteristic category of his organic view of the universe.

Trendelenburg's main exposition of the category of purpose appears in chapters IX through XI of volume II of the *Untersuchungen*. Here we learn how the concept of a final cause differs from an efficient one, and why explanation by final causes (teleology) is not logically reducible to explanation by efficient causes alone (mechanism). Pulling together Trendelenburg's various scattered remarks from these chapters, we find that there are for him three basic differences between final and efficient causes, or between teleological and mechanical explanation. First, the final cause gives the idea of the whole, so that when we explain something according to a final cause we make the whole the *explanans*, the particular actions or parts the *explanandum*. In other words, teleological explanation is holistic. It assumes that the idea of the whole precedes its parts and makes them possible; we understand the part only by its place or function in the whole. Mechanical explanation is just the opposite: the parts are prior to the whole and make it possible. It supposes that the parts are self-sufficient units, each comprehensible on their own; and it forms the idea of the whole through the aggregation or composition of these parts. Hence mechanical explanation is not holistic but analytic or reductivistic (II, 20, 22). Second, a final cause acts without being acted upon; it assumes that the organism is self-moving, self-regulating and self-organizing. An efficient cause, however, acts only if it is acted upon; it presupposes that there is some external cause for every event, and that there is some external designer for a machine (II, 97–98). Third, the final cause, though prior in the order of explanation, is later in the order of being; the efficient cause, though secondary in the order of explanation, is prior in the order of being (II, 22–23). What is produced and posterior for the efficient cause is the producer and prior for the final cause.

All of these differences between final and efficient causes, teleology and mechanism, are standard and classical. They go back to Aristotle, whom Trendelenburg frequently cites in chapter IX (II, 14, 21, 23, 33, 66). They were also reaffirmed by Kant in the second half of the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, a text to which Trendelenburg repeatedly refers (II, 18n1, 46n1, 51n1–2, 53n1, 145n2).

To accept all these distinctions is not, of course, sufficient to vindicate teleology. It is one thing to say that teleology is not reducible to mechanism; it is quite another to say that teleology is still necessary to explain the world. In other words, admitting the logical irreducibility of teleological explanation is not accepting its applicability or explanatory value. Trendelenburg is aware of this, of course, and accordingly he spends most of his effort in chapters IX and XI arguing that teleology is necessary for the complete explanation of nature. To this end, one of his strategies is to point out that some of the foremost biologists of his day find it necessary to appeal to final causes.

Georges Cuvier, for example, has shown how every living organism forms a whole, a unique and closed system, where all its parts correspond to one another to achieve its purpose (II, 8–9). Karl Ernst von Baer has demonstrated that the muscles and joints of a specific organism are uniquely adapted to one another, and that their interworking cannot be explained simply by mechanics alone (II, 7–8). Finally, Johannes von Müller has demonstrated how every aspect of the process of breathing, and the finer structure of the lungs, follows from the need of the organism to replenish the blood with oxygen (II, 33–34). In appealing to these figures, Trendelenburg was making a strong case for teleology. Cuvier, Baer and Müller were the leaders in their field, and they had all advocated a teleological and holistic approach to the explanation of life.

When Trendelenburg wrote the first edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen* in the late 1830s, his teleology was only in keeping with the main tradition of German physiology and biology, and indeed with the latest findings of research. From the 1790s to the 1840s, German physiology and biology had been dominated by the “teleomechanical” or “vital materialist” tradition, which had been founded by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840), Carl Friedrich Kielmeyer (1765–1844) and Johann Christian Reill (1759–1813).<sup>22</sup> This tradition strived to find a middle path between a complete mechanism, which abolished all final causes, and an old-fashioned vitalism, which postulated unique living forces above and beyond the mechanical and material forces of life. Its guiding principle was that organisms are primitive, that they are wholes irreducible to their parts, and that they are inherently purposive and goal-directed, such that all their parts and processes are intelligible only through them. Nevertheless, these thinkers still stressed the importance of explaining life mechanically, and of examining its material processes, on the grounds that the purposive activity of nature could be realized only through these mechanisms and processes, which are the essential means to the realization of its ends. This approach to physiology and biology was still very much alive in the 1830s in the embryological research of Johannes Müller (1801–1858) and Karl Ernst von Baer (1792–1876), which had come to the conclusion that the process of individuation and differentiation was included in, and indeed directed by, the general idea of an organism.<sup>23</sup> It was no accident that Trendelenburg referred expressly to their work, which seemed to be strong vindication for his own advocacy of telology.

Yet the direction of science was rapidly moving against this tradition, and so against Trendelenburg himself. In the late 1840s a new “physicalist” program arose in physiology led by Carl Ludwig (1816–1895) and Ernst Brücke (1819–1892, and by some of Müller’s rebellious students in Berlin, by Robert Remak (1815–1865), Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902), Emil Du Bois-Reymond (1818–1898), Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–1894) and Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> On this tradition, see Timothy Lenoir, *The Strategy of Life: Teleology and Mechanics in Nineteenth Century German Biology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

<sup>23</sup> Lenoir, *Teleology and Mechanics*, 85, 111.

<sup>24</sup> On Müller’s students, see especially Laura Otis, *Müller’s Lab* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

This new generation had little patience for the idea of a living force, even if it were internal to the mechanical and chemical workings of an organism. They shifted the focus of research away from organic form and function, which seemed immeasurable and indefinable, and toward mechanisms and chemical processes alone, which alone could be precisely measured and observed. They saw no explanatory value in appealing to the general idea of an organism and its purpose, but stressed the importance of pushing the boundaries of mechanical and chemical explanation. This physicalist program had come into its own by the 1850s.<sup>25</sup> In the early 1860s, Trendelenburg had to confront another potent threat to his organic vision of the universe: the rise of Darwinism. We shall soon see how Trendelenburg responded to that challenge.

Though these developments will very much concern Trendelenburg, most of his defense of teleology in the *Logische Untersuchungen* is philosophical rather than empirical. This was a perfectly appropriate strategy in the first half of the nineteenth century, given the ambiguity and inconclusiveness of empirical research, and given the broader philosophical conclusions drawn from it, not to mention the philosophical presuppositions behind it. A crucial part of his defense consists in the argument that teleological explanation does not postulate supernatural agents that interfere with the order of natural causes. True to the teleo-mechanical tradition, Trendelenburg insists that purposes work *through* efficient causes, which are their necessary means and instruments, so that there is a harmony between mechanism and the kingdom of ends. The purpose acts as an agent within the matter, organizing it and making it grow in distinctive ways. So rather than violating the order of natural causes, a purpose imposes necessity upon it, because its ends have to be realized in definite ways under definite circumstances. It is only from the concept of a purpose that we can understand why everything in the mechanism must act as it does. In making these arguments Trendelenburg was still combatting the old religious conception of teleology, which saw the purposes of nature as external to it, much as the designer of a machine stands apart from his invention. True to Aristotle, Trendelenburg insists that the purposes of things are inherent in them, that they are essential to the very nature of the thing and not imposed from outside them. What is the ultimate or final cause of nature itself is left out of account; to attribute inner purposes to things in nature it is not necessary to know that they conform to divine design or providence.

Accepting this conception of an internal teleology does not put Trendelenburg entirely out of the woods, however. For, as he knew all too well, there was another deeper problem behind internal teleology: namely, how does the purpose inhere in the thing? There is not only the problem of how something future, having an ideal existence, can act in the present, but also the issue of how something universal and ideal can exist in something particular and real. The purpose has at first an essentially ideal and normative status; it determines what the organism should be. But how does

<sup>25</sup> On the physicalist program, see especially Lynn Nyhart, *Biology Takes Form: Animal Morphology and the German Universities, 1800–1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 65–80.

something purely ideal work within something real? For these issues Trendelenburg had no ready answer and simply admitted the difficulty (II, 77).

At bottom the main proof of teleology, Trendelenburg realizes, comes from the apparent fact that efficient causes alone are not sufficient to explain the phenomena (II, 72–73, 75). No amount of explanation by efficient causes alone will work, he argues, because they cannot explain why all the parts of an organism interact in the first place. Mechanical explanation takes interaction as given; but it cannot explain the reason for it. It is hard to determine, however, how much store Trendelenburg put into this argument. Sometimes he treats it as if it were self-evident and rests his case with the popular argument that it is highly improbable that an organism could come together through the working of its parts alone; that is no more likely, he says, than all the letters of the alphabet coming together by themselves and forming a poem (II, 66–67). But Trendelenburg knew all too well that this popular argument was weak.<sup>26</sup> After all, the mechanist contends not that the parts of the organism come together by chance but that they do so of necessity (II, 66). More significantly, he concedes that there is a problem in resorting too quickly to explanation by final causes, that we risk postulating them prematurely because we have not pushed enquiry far enough into the mechanism of nature (II, 75). “The discontinuity is perhaps, more deeply investigated, a continuum ...” (II, 75) Trendelenburg thus sees that teleology is perhaps nothing but a stop gap, a refuge of ignorance, which we use when we have insufficient evidence for the workings of the mechanism of nature.

In defending final causes it was crucial for Trendelenburg to reply to Kant’s famous critique of teleology in the second half of the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. There Kant had argued that the concept of a final cause should have only a regulative status in the explanation of nature, i.e., we should treat nature *as if* it acts for ends because this brings systematic order to our explanation of nature; but we have no right to assume that nature really does act for ends. While Kant insisted that the concept of a final cause is irreducible to a mechanical one, and while he also believed that it is invaluable in bringing systematic unity to the investigation of nature, he was still skeptical that there would ever be sufficient evidence to assume that there really are purposes in nature. Final causes are crucial for our anthropomorphic and anthropocentric way of explaining things; but we have no insight into the purposes of nature itself. Trendelenburg duly responds to this conception of teleology in section 5 of chapter IX (II, 46–54). He finds Kant’s reasoning both inconclusive and incoherent. It is inconclusive because the mere fact that the concept of purpose has a subjective origin, that it is anthropomorphic and anthropocentric, does not mean that it cannot be true

<sup>26</sup> Hence, remarkably, Trendelenburg faults Aristotle for his weak argument against Empedocles’ proto-Darwinian theory that organisms arise from natural selection (I, 64–66). Aristotle contended against Empedocles that nature works according to regular laws and that an organism cannot arise from chance factors alone. See *Physics* II, 4, 196a. But Empedocles, Trendelenburg notes, also thinks that nature works in regular ways, namely, by granting survival to those organisms that can adapt to their circumstances.



of things themselves (II, 49). Kant makes the same mistake with final causes as he does with the forms of space and time: just because these forms are a priori and originate in our mental activity, it does not follow that they cannot also be true of things themselves. Kant's reasoning about final causes is also incoherent because making them into regulative principles does not aid enquiry but undermines it. Natural enquiry should always take further investigation into the *mechanical* causes of nature; but teleology overturns this because it postulates, on Kant's own analysis, a very different kind of cause (II, 51–52). But if the enquiry into mechanical causes really does come to an end, so that it is impossible to go further and we have to postulate a final cause, then it becomes pointless to give the final cause a strictly regulative status (II, 53).

A more weighty opponent than Kant for Trendelenburg's defense of final causes was Spinoza. Ever since the seventeenth century Spinoza had been notorious for his rejection of teleology, which he had dismissed in his *Ethica* as an anthropomorphic and anthropocentric form of explanation.<sup>27</sup> This reputation only grew in the eighteenth century. In his famous 1786 *Briefe über die Lehre von Spinoza* F.H. Jacobi had emphasized this feature of Spinoza's system, which he called "the system of merely efficient causes or natural necessity".<sup>28</sup> Given the impact of Jacobi's book on the entire *Goethezeit*, it had become impossible to ignore Spinoza. So, for Trendelenburg, a reckoning with Spinoza was simply *de rigueur*.<sup>29</sup>

Sure enough, in the *Logische Untersuchungen* he had a short section criticizing Spinoza's attitude toward final causes (II, 41–46). Here he complained that Spinoza's system gave no place to the idea of life, and that his single infinite substance was static and dead. "The investigation of the organic as the organic is completely missing in him" (II, 43). Because Spinoza gave no place to final causes, he also could not do justice to individuality: "...just because he gives no place to purpose, the value of individual life disappears for him, swirling around like dust upon substance only to sink into this great grave of necessity". These were common charges against Spinoza during the 1790s and early 1800s. Such complaints appear in Herder, Hölderlin, Novalis, Schelling and Hegel. To them, Trendelenburg adds nothing new.

Spinoza deserved better, and Trendelenburg knew it. The critique of Spinoza in the *Logische Untersuchungen* had raised some plausible points, but it had not really given them sufficient bite or backing. Trendelenburg had not penetrated to the fundamentals of Spinoza's system nor explained why its basic principles preclude teleology. To remedy this deficiency, he embarked on a detailed study of Spinoza, the fruit of which was a long essay *Über Spinoza's Grundgedanken und dessen Erfolg*, which he gave as an address

<sup>27</sup> See Spinoza, *Ethica*, Pars Prima, Appendix; and Pars Quarta, Præfatio.

<sup>28</sup> See Jacobi, *Werke* (Leipzig: Fleischer, 1812), IV/2, 95.

<sup>29</sup> I have discussed Trendelenburg's relation to Spinoza in more detail in my "Trendelenburg and Spinoza", in *Spinoza and German Idealism*, eds. Yitzhak Melamed and Eckart Förster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 232–247.



in the Academy of Sciences in 1849.<sup>30</sup> This article is Trendelenburg's main settling of accounts with Spinoza. It marks a great step forward in the study of Spinoza's philosophy in Germany.<sup>31</sup> It has the great merit of going into the details of Spinoza's reasoning, and insisting upon the need for a strictly internal critique of his system. This was a marked improvement not only upon the old eighteenth-century polemics against Spinoza, but also upon the romantics' approach to Spinoza, who were sympathetic to him but simply read their ideas into him.

Trendelenburg credits Spinoza for having a unique and important place in the history of philosophy. He sees that Spinoza's system is not simply materialism, and stresses that it is neither materialism nor idealism, i.e., it does not explain the mind according to the efficient causes in matter, nor does it explain matter according to final causes. Rather, its "basic idea" or *Grundgedanke* is that the mental and physical, thought and extension, are different attributes of one and the same thing, namely, the single infinite substance, God. It is this basic idea, and not any alleged "materialism", Trendelenburg contends, that is the basis for Spinoza's denial of final causes. According to this idea, there cannot be interaction between the mental and the physical, thought and extension, because they are completely distinct attributes of substance; the body cannot determine the soul to think, and the soul cannot determine the body to rest or motion. As attributes of one and the same substance, however, the mental and physical are parallel to one another, so that the order of ideas in the mind harmonizes or corresponds to the order of things. Or, as Spinoza famously put it, "the order and connection of ideas is one and the same with the order and connection of things".<sup>32</sup> Now it follows from this basic idea, Trendelenburg points out, that final causes or purposes have no efficacy or effect in the world of extended nature; for a final cause assumes that a thought, concept, or idea can shape or change extended things in nature, that it can have an effect upon things in space. It was for this reason that Spinoza banished final causes. It was not because he made matter the basic attribute to explain all things, but because he made mind and matter separate attributes of substance (II, 6).

Trendelenburg's main objection to Spinoza's "basic idea" is simply that he provides insufficient or obscure grounds for it (II, 18–19). The proof for it is lacking, even if we accept all his definitions and axioms. The main reason mind and body, thought and extension, do not interact is that attributes of substance are completely independent of one another, and they are so independent because they "express" the independent and self-sufficient essence of substance itself. So just as substance exists "in itself",

<sup>30</sup> This article was originally published separately by the Academy of Sciences, *Über Spinoza's Grundgedanken und dessen Erfolg* (Berlin: Bethge, 1850). All references in parentheses are to this edition. It was published later in volume II of his *Historische Beiträge zur Philosophie* (Berlin: Bethge, 1855), 31–111.

<sup>31</sup> The other great step forward, which appeared only five years later, was volume I of Kuno Fischer's new history of modern philosophy, *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie* (Mannheim: Bassermann & Mathy, 1854). Fischer was critical of Trendelenburg's interpretation on many points, foreshadowing the later acrimonious dispute between them.

<sup>32</sup> Spinoza, *Ethica*, Pars Secunda, Prop.VII.

having no connection or relation to anything else, so thought and extension exist in themselves, having no connection or relation to anything else. Spinoza does not really explain how, though, an attribute “expresses” substance, or why it should have the same characteristics as substance itself. If an attribute is “that by which the intellect perceives the essence of substance”, as Spinoza defines it,<sup>33</sup> why should it have the same property as substance itself? An attribute need no more have the defining properties of substance, it would seem, than the idea of a cat should have fur, whiskers and a tail. Apart from this purely logical point, Trendelenburg adds another basic complaint against Spinoza: like Hölderlin, Schelling and Hegel before him, he complains that Spinoza has no explanation for how the infinite becomes finite, i.e., for how the eternal single substance creates the many individual things in the temporal finite world (II, 33, 38). This is the reason for the point he made in the *Logische Untersuchungen* that Spinoza has no explanation for the existence of individuality, for the place of determinate finite things in nature as a whole. If Spinoza were to recognize individuality, Trendelenburg argues, he would soon find that he needs final causes. For final causes are crucial in defining the unity and identity of individual things; they constitute an essential part of the *principium individuationis*. We need to explain the identity of an individual thing, which changes and develops throughout time, by its striving, which consists in its attempt to realize a goal or end. Spinoza virtually acknowledges as much when he states in Pars III of the *Ethica* that “every thing strives to persevere in its nature”,<sup>34</sup> which is a fundamental proposition for all his ethics and politics. But, Trendelenburg insists, had he fully developed the implications of this proposition he would have to admit that it presupposes the concept of a final cause. For what is this striving to persist in its own nature other than the goal or purpose of its actions? (II, 39).

In the first and second edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen* Trendelenburg had devoted most of his critical attention to Kant and Spinoza, who were then the most potent enemies of his organic view of the world. But, by the 1860s, a new adversary had come on the intellectual stage, one more potent than either Kant or Spinoza. This adversary was no less than Ernst Haeckel, the leading spokesman for German Darwinism.<sup>35</sup> Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* had appeared in 1859, and it was quickly translated into German by Heinrich Bronn in 1860.<sup>36</sup> Darwin’s ideas were not slow in finding acceptance in Germany, and their most powerful champion was

<sup>33</sup> Spinoza, *Ethica*, Pars Prima, Def. IV: “Per attributum intelligo id, quod intellectus de substantia percipit, tanquam ejusdem essentiali constitutus”. Spinoza’s obscure language has been the source of endless controversy about the subjective or objective status of attributes. Trendelenburg seems to take a subjectivist reading, assuming that the attributes are essentially the work of the intellect: “Denken und Ausdehnung sind nur die beiden nothwendigen Weisen, unter welchen sich der Verstand des Wesen der unendlichen Substanz vorstellt.” (I, 5) However, he also sees that whatever the intellect perceives of substance, which constitutes the entire universe, really cannot be added to it or stand outside it (I, 10). He does not explicitly address the thorny question of the status of the attributes.

<sup>34</sup> Spinoza, *Ethica*, Pars Tertia, Prop. VI.

<sup>35</sup> On Haeckel, see Robert Richards’ magisterial *The Tragic Sense of Life: Ernst Haeckel and the Struggle over Evolutionary Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> Charles Darwin, *Über die Entstehung der Arten im Thier- und Pflanzen-Reich durch natürliche Züchtung* (Stuttgart: Schweizerbart, 1860).

Haeckel, who gave them their most provocative formulation yet in his 1868 *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte*.<sup>37</sup> Haeckel saw Darwin's work as evidence for a monistic view of nature, one where efficient causes alone, apart from supernatural agency, were sufficient to account for all biological phenomena.

Responding to this challenge, Trendelenburg wrote a long appendix to chapter IX in the third edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen* (II, 79–94). Here he immediately acknowledges that, simply because there is so much solid empirical research behind it, Darwin's work constitutes a much greater threat to the organic worldview than Spinoza (II, 79–80). Trendelenburg questions, however, the general philosophical conclusions that Haeckel draws from Darwin's work. We cannot explain life from its physical or chemical conditions alone, he argues, because there is a conceptual leap from the inorganic to the organic (II, 84). To get the organic out of the inorganic it is necessary to illicitly inject the organic into matter by assuming a primal act of creation, a *generatio aequivoca*, for which there is not a shred of empirical evidence. Trendelenburg doubts that there is sufficient evidence for the intermediate life forms assumed by the theory of natural selection; but even if there were, he contends, this would not exclude final causes (II, 84–85). Even if we could show, for example, all the intermediate stages by which the light receptors in lower organisms eventually evolved into the human eye, this would not disprove the existence of purposes, which might be realized very gradually and through stages (II, 88). The theory of natural selection not only permits but presupposes final causes, Trendelenburg contends, because the concepts of adaption and struggle for existence assume that organisms do act for a purpose, namely, survival (II, 88). But more than that, evolution shows that organisms, by natural selection and adaption to their environment, not only survive but perfect themselves over the generations (II, 91).<sup>38</sup>

On the whole, Trendelenburg's critique of Haeckel was a decidedly rear-guard action, the last defense of a retreating worldview. Trendelenburg was on his shakiest ground in doubting that there is sufficient empirical evidence for the intermediate life-forms between species. This laid his own theory open to empirical refutation. Of course, he was right to doubt whether there was enough evidence in the 1870s; but evidence for these life-forms would gradually grow with time. The increasing evidence for them would make the argument for materialism seem like less of a non sequitur. In insisting that philosophy keep step with the sciences Trendelenburg was making his philosophy vulnerable; by these very standards, he was losing the battle for the organic worldview. The progress of scientific enquiry was leading inevitably toward a greater mechanism; for better or worse, teleology seemed more and more to be that refuge of ignorance once condemned by Spinoza.

<sup>37</sup> Ernst Haeckel, *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte* (Berlin: Reimer, 1868). On the argument of this work, see Richards, *Tragic Sense*, 217–276.

<sup>38</sup> Curiously enough, on this point Darwin and Haeckel would not have disagreed with Trendelenburg. See Richards. *Tragic Sense*, 98–100.

## 5. Idealism and Realism

Because of his critique of Kant and Hegel, Trendelenburg's philosophy has often been placed in opposition to the idealist tradition.<sup>39</sup> But such a contrast is misleading, not simply because Trendelenburg shares many basic doctrines with Kant and Hegel, but also because he describes his own doctrine as "idealism". In the penultimate chapter of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, "Idealismus und Realismus," he defines the various senses of "idealism" and "realism" and attempts to locate his own philosophy within the welter of meanings. This raises important questions: in what sense is Trendelenburg's philosophy "idealism"? And to what extent is it also compatible with "realism"? Any general understanding of Trendelenburg's philosophy has to answer such basic questions.

Trendelenburg's idealism has to be understood within the context of his organic worldview. According to that worldview, everything in nature is governed by or conforms to a purpose, a final cause. "The organic worldview sees the world from the standpoint of purpose, and the powers penetrated by this purpose are its living body." (II, 500) Trendelenburg constantly describes purpose as "the concept", "thought", or "idea" behind things, so that to say everything conforms to a purpose means that it conforms to a concept, thought or idea. It is chiefly in this sense that we can describe his philosophy as "idealism". This indeed agrees with Trendelenburg's own use of the term. Idealism is for him the thesis that everything in nature conforms to purposes, where a purpose is the "idea", "concept", or "thought" behind things.

Of course, idealism is more than just the doctrine that nature conforms to ends. The organic worldview demands that we view nature as more than a collection or composite of distinct organisms; rather, we must regard it as a *single* organism. Idealism then means that all of nature should conform to a *single* purpose, idea or concept. What should be this purpose? Regarding this all-important question Trendelenburg is very elusive. He leaves us with Plato's statement in the *Timaeus*: "God was good; and because he was so, he created the world without envy and wanted it to be as much like him as possible."<sup>40</sup> The single purpose behind the universal organism is therefore, as Plato would have it, the form of the good.

Trendelenburg understands his idealism to be the antithesis not of *realism* (the doctrine that the external world exists and we know it as such), but of *mechanism* (the doctrine that nature is only a machine and that efficient causality is the only legitimate form of causality). The opposition between organicism and mechanism is for Trendelenburg the fundamental opposition in philosophy.<sup>41</sup> These are the two chief

<sup>39</sup> See Köhnke, *Neukantianismus*, 23, 32, 39. See also Morris, "Trendelenburg" in *The New Englander* XXXIII (1874), 287–356, esp. 295–297.

<sup>40</sup> Plato, *Timaeus* 29e–30a. Trendelenburg cites this passage at *Logische Untersuchungen* II, 502–503. I have translated Plato directly from the German.

<sup>41</sup> Trendelenburg outlined this view most clearly and forcefully in his Academy Address, delivered November 18, 1847, "Über den letzten Unterschied der philosophischen Systeme," in *Philologische und historische Abhandlungen der königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1847), 241–262. The same views are expressed more briefly in *Logische Untersuchungen* II, 496–502.

philosophical systems, and all are simply some variation of these two. This fundamental opposition arises from the basic distinction in human experience between the subjective and objective, the ideal and real, thought and being. We can take two basic positions regarding this difference: either we make thought or the ideal prior to being and the real, or we make being or the real prior to thought and the ideal. The former view is "Platonism" or the organic worldview, and the latter view is "mechanism" or "the physical worldview".<sup>42</sup> Trendelenburg understood such "Platonism in a wider sense" to be synonymous with "idealism".<sup>43</sup>

*Prima facie* it is odd to find Trendelenburg referring to his idealism as "Platonism in the broader sense". For this does not seem to fit with his Aristotelianism, which dominates so many other aspects of his philosophy. Yet this oddity disappears once we recognize that Trendelenburg regarded Aristotle's philosophy as a form of Platonism. This was indeed just the point behind the qualifying phrase "in the wider sense". Aristotle was a Platonist insofar as he too affirmed the intelligibility of things, the ruling *nous* that governed all things. The specific form in which Aristotle upheld this thesis was in claiming that the forms exist not in another world but in the things of this world as their purposes or final causes. It was in just this Aristotelian sense that Trendelenburg endorsed "Platonism" and defined his own idealism.<sup>44</sup> He was completely loyal to Aristotle, then, in defining his idealism in teleological terms.

When it came to defining exactly what is meant by the objectivity of reason, the intelligibility of things, it is striking how closely Trendelenburg stuck to Aristotle. In the final section of chapter XVIII of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, "Der Schluss," a long treatment of the syllogism, Trendelenburg cites Aristotle against Hegel to define the precise sense in which the syllogism can be regarded as objective. The objective meaning of the syllogism is obscured by Hegel, he says, as it has been illuminated by Aristotle (II, 393). Hegel had written about the syllogism indiscriminately in his *Wissenschaft der Logik*, as if any syllogism at all reflected the objective structure of things. But Trendelenburg insisted that only some syllogisms have this capacity; for some reflect the *ratio cognoscendi*, the order of cognition, whereas others reflect the *ratio essendi*, the order of things. What syllogisms reflect the order of things, and precisely how they do so, he argues, was explained perfectly by Aristotle in his *Posterior Analytics*.<sup>45</sup> There Aristotle states that the reason for a fact is formulable by the middle term in a syllogism. If, for example, we want to explain why the Athenians became involved in a war with the Persians, our explanation can be reconstructed as follows: "All nations who suffer unprovoked raids have reason for war; the Athenians suffered unprovoked raids by the Persians; therefore, the Athenians had reason for

<sup>42</sup> "Über den letzten Unterschied," 260.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Logische Untersuchungen* II, 504, 515 and "Über den letzten Unterschied", 250, 260.

<sup>44</sup> Trendelenburg held that in the *Timaeus* Plato himself embraced the Aristotelian doctrine by claiming that "the thought of purpose enters into the very nature of matter". See *Logische Untersuchungen* II, 32.

<sup>45</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* II, 2, 89b–90a.

going to war against the Persians”.<sup>46</sup> Here the explanation is suffering unprovoked raids, which is the middle term of the syllogism. Aristotle had correctly grasped and precisely formulated, Trendelenburg concludes, the fundamental truth about the intelligibility of things: “*What is in reality the reason, is in logic the middle concept of the syllogism*” (II, 388).

While Trendelenburg was eager to associate his idealism with Aristotle, he was intent on dissociating it from Kant. In his penultimate chapter he explains how his own “Platonic” idealism differs from Kant’s transcendental idealism. While his idealism identifies the idea with the Platonic forms as they exist in things, Kant’s idealism identifies the idea with the content of our representations, with what we are conscious or aware of in experience. Transcendental idealism is the thesis that the *content of our representations* is only ideal, i.e., that the world as we represent it is not the same as the world as it exists in itself, apart from and prior to our representations (II, 515). The antithesis of transcendental idealism is therefore not mechanism but what Kant calls “transcendental realism”, i.e., the doctrine that the world as we experience it, as it appears in our representations, is the same as reality in itself. While the dispute between organicism and mechanism is essentially *metaphysical*, about the essential forms of explanation to account for nature, the dispute between transcendental idealism and transcendental realism is basically *epistemological*, about what it is that we know from perception. In seeing the opposition between organicism and mechanism as the fundamental division in philosophy, Trendelenburg was deliberately re-orienting philosophy away from its earlier epistemological problematic and toward a more metaphysical one.

For Trendelenburg, and indeed most of the post-Kantian generation,<sup>47</sup> the basic problem with Kant’s transcendental idealism is that it leads to “subjectivism”, i.e., the doctrine that we know only the content of our own representations and no reality beyond them. Kant had limited all knowledge to appearances, which he had sometimes identified with representations in us, so that it seemed as if we could know nothing more than our own representations. Although Kant had sometimes defined appearances in more relational terms as appearances of things-in-themselves, it seemed inconsistent for him to do so, because he had limited all knowledge to experience and forbade knowledge of things-in-themselves. If we could not have any knowledge of things-in-themselves, how could we even know that appearances were of things-in-themselves? For Trendelenburg, as for so many thinkers of the post-Kantian generation, this was an unsatisfactory result, indeed the *reductio ad absurdum* of transcendental idealism. It is the first desideratum of all knowledge, he wrote, that we know reality itself, not simply how we represent it or how it appears to us. As he put it in the

<sup>46</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* II, 2, 94b.

<sup>47</sup> For the prevalence of this view, see my *German Idealism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 48, 606–607.

*Logische Untersuchungen*: “It is the taut nerve in all knowing that we want to reach the thing as it is; we want the thing, not ourselves” (I, 163).

It was the great advantage of his own idealism over Kant’s, Trendelenburg believed, that it could be an idealism without subjectivism, and a realism without materialism (II, 529). In thus attempting to combine idealism with realism, Trendelenburg was only keeping with the agenda of the early romantics, who wanted to avoid materialism and subjectivism in a doctrine they called “ideal-realism” or “real-idealism”.<sup>48</sup> How is it possible to combine idealism and realism? To have idealism without subjectivism? Realism without materialism? Trendelenburg’s solution is to appeal to the primacy of teleology. The thesis that everything in nature conforms to the idea (idealism) is then perfectly compatible with the thesis that nature exists without awareness of it (realism). This would be idealism without subjectivism, because we can claim that everything in nature, *as it exists before the advent of consciousness*, still exists for some purpose. And this would be realism without materialism, because it would deny the primacy or sole validity of efficient or mechanical causes. It would maintain the priority of final causes, so that the working of efficient causes, the whole mechanism of nature, exists solely for some purpose, which is their concept or idea.

How to justify realism was a crucial question for Trendelenburg, one almost as important as how to justify idealism itself. Only with a sound defense of realism could he claim to avoid the morass of Kantian subjectivism. Trendelenburg addresses this important issue only in the penultimate chapter of the *Logische Untersuchungen*. It immediately becomes clear, however, that there is for him no easy and quick road to realism. He rejects Locke’s naive attempt in the *Essay concerning human Understanding* to ground realism on the distinction between primary (viz., size, shape, and weight) and secondary (viz., taste, color, and odor) qualities. The problem with this distinction, he argues, is that even primary qualities are not just given to us in sense perception; they too are constructed by our mental activity, which co-ordinates visual and tactual cues and then projects them outside ourselves (II, 518). Sense perception is never a simple picture, image or replication of an external reality, as Locke would have it. There is indeed much empirical evidence, Trendelenburg concedes, for Kant’s account of perception, which stresses the active role of the subject in constituting experience. Citing the latest research of Johannes von Müller and Hermann Helmholtz,<sup>49</sup> he notes how each sense perceives things in its own peculiar manner and then reads them into the external world. Different stimuli acting on the same sensory nerves produce the same sensation; the same stimuli working on different nerves produce different sensations (II, 519). When we consider these facts, we have to admit that the senses have for their

<sup>48</sup> On this agenda of the early romantics, see my *The Romantic Imperative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 131–152.

<sup>49</sup> Trendelenburg cites Johannes Müller’s *Physiologie des Menschen* (Coblenz: Hölscher, 1838–40), II, 250f and Helmholtz’s “Physische Optik,” in Gustav Karsten’s *Allgemeine Encyclopädie der Physik* (Leipzig: Voss, 1860–1869), 208ff.



objects only their own “nervous energy” and not the specific qualities of the external world (II, 520). What comes to consciousness through the nerves are only qualities of our nerves and no qualities of external objects (II, 520).

Given such evidence, why not admit the case for subjectivism? Trendelenburg insists that this would still be a non sequitur. From all the evidence of physiology we still cannot deny the existence of the external world and some knowledge of it. We know that our sensations arise from interaction with something outside our consciousness for the simple reason that we cannot produce by our own conscious activity all the differences in the content of our sensations; it is not because of my own cognitive activity that I see a red blob here and a green blob over there (II, 522). We are subject to constraint in the stimuli that we receive, and it is because of this constraint that we infer the reality of these perceptions (II, 524–525). Trendelenburg argues against Kant that we can apply the category of causality beyond the immediate content of our consciousness because only that gives us an explanation for the constraint that we feel in our experience. Once we admit such a wider use of the concept of cause, we can avoid Kant’s subjectivism, because we have a license, indeed a strong reason, to assume an external cause for our own sensations.

It is easy to sympathize with Trendelenburg’s attempt to join idealism with realism, given that materialism and subjectivism are such unattractive positions. It is questionable, however, that Trendelenburg did enough to ground his realism. He did not address sufficiently the question how we reliably infer the existence of external objects, and some knowledge of them, if all we are aware of is “the energy of our senses”. How do we know that difference in content in sensation corresponds to difference in objects if different sensations have the same stimuli and different stimuli produce the same sensations? What, indeed, justifies the transcendent application of the category of causality? After all, the feeling of constraint need not be due to an external cause but it could be due to some hidden subconscious inner cause? It is only with the greatest philosophical generosity—or negligence—that we can give Trendelenburg a pass on these issues.<sup>50</sup> We will have to return to them again when we consider his dispute with Fischer. For here we will find the ultimate rationale for Trendelenburg’s realism: that it alone could justify the application of mathematics to nature.

## 6. Critique of Hegel

A large part of Trendelenburg’s claim to fame rests on his critique of Hegel, which is usually credited with playing a major role in diminishing Hegel’s influence in the 1840s.<sup>51</sup> Although Trendelenburg’s polemic was first greeted with protest, even

<sup>50</sup> In this sense Rudolf Eucken’s complaint that Trendelenburg had not done justice to the subjective side of modern philosophy is perfectly justified. See his “Zur Charakteristik der Philosophie Trendelenburgs” in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* (Heidelberg: Georg Weiß Verlag, 1881), 117–44, esp. 128, 139.

<sup>51</sup> Eduard Zeller said Trendelenburg’s attack had been “sharp and successful”. See his *Geschichte der deutschen Philosophie seit Leibniz* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1873), 908. See also the assessment by Karl von Prantl, himself once a Hegelian, in his *Gedächtnisrede*, 10–11, and by Bonitz, *Erinnerung*, 22–23.



derision, by the Hegelians, it stood its own because of its thorough and painstaking criticisms. The Hegelians were not effective in responding to them, at least not in a way that would reassure true believers. Such was their impact that Karl Rosenkranz, a leading Hegelian, complained in 1846 that the Hegelian response to them lay in a state of “stagnation”.<sup>52</sup> More than a decade later, with the benefit of hindsight, Rosenkranz had to admit: “Through his logical investigations...Trendelenburg shattered the authority of Hegel’s system.”<sup>53</sup>

Trendelenburg’s critique of Hegel appears mainly in two writings. One is chapter III of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, “Die dialektische Methode”, which covers more than ninety pages in the enlarged 1862 edition.<sup>54</sup> The other is his short tract *Die logische Frage in Hegel’s System: Zwei Streitschriften*, which consists in two short articles he originally wrote for the *Neue jenaische allgemeine Literaturzeitung* in 1843.<sup>55</sup> Chapter III is the more substantial treatment of Hegel’s arguments; *Zwei Streitschriften* is essentially a summary of that treatment and a reply to its critics. Our task here is to bring to light and assess the main arguments of chapter III of the second edition. We shall find that they are more powerful than neo-Hegelians allow.

To assess the validity of Hegel’s system, Trendelenburg insisted that it is necessary to go in a new direction, to make a clean break with the futile discussions of the past. Throughout the 1830s the friends and foes of Hegel’s system had discussed tirelessly its theological and political implications; the famous split between left and right Hegelians almost entirely revolved around these issues. But all these discussions and debates were pointless, Trendelenburg complained, because they alone could not decide the question of the ultimate truth of Hegel’s system. That system had to be judged on its own terms, and those terms were strictly and entirely logical. The foundation of Hegel’s system, Trendelenburg stressed, rests upon his logic, which supports his moral, religious and political philosophy. As he put it in *Zwei Streitschriften*: “The basic question of the system is the *logical* question” (3).

Accordingly, Trendelenburg makes the target of his critique Hegel’s two expositions of his logic: the larger two volume *Wissenschaft der Logik* and the shorter version in part one of his *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*. In stressing the primacy of the logic, Trendelenburg stood on solid textual grounds. The older and

<sup>52</sup> Karl Rosenkranz, *Die Modifikation der Logik abgeleitet aus dem Begriff des Denkens* (Berlin: Jonas, 1846), 250.

<sup>53</sup> Karl Rosenkranz, *Wissenschaft der logischen Idee* (Königsberg: Bornträger, 1859), II, vii.

<sup>54</sup> Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen* (1862), I, 36–129. This chapter was unaltered in the 1870 edition. The first edition was much shorter, I, 23–99. The larger second edition responds to some of Trendelenburg’s Hegelian critics. Besides chapter III, Trendelenburg would criticize Hegel throughout the *Untersuchungen*. The most important passages from the 1870 edition are as follows: chapter IX, sec. 6 (II, 54–64); chapter XIII, sec. 17 (II, 220–227); chapter XVI, sec. 8 (290–292) and sec. 12 (294–311); chapter XVIII, sec. 5 (360–388); and chapter XIX, sec. 7 (422–430). Trendelenburg offers a summary version of his criticisms in his *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre* (Berlin: Bethge, 1846), 355–362.

<sup>55</sup> *Die logische Frage in Hegel’s System: Zwei Streitschriften* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1843). The first article originally appeared in *Neue Jenaische Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* 1 Jahrgang, Nr. 97 (23.4.1842), 405–408 and Nr. 98 (25.4.1842), 409–412 and Nr. 99 (26.4.1842), 413–414; and the second article appeared in 2 Jahrgang, Nr. 45 (22.2.1843), 181–184; Nr. 46 (23.2.1843), 185–188; and Nr. 47 (24.2.1843), 189–191.

more mature Hegel had often insisted that the foundation of his system is his logic. He had made logic the starting point and first part of his system in his *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*. Nevertheless, as any student of Hegel knows, this leaves a troubling lingering question: what about Hegel's earlier work, his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*? This too had a strong claim to be the foundation of the system. The younger Hegel had argued that ordinary consciousness has to be first educated to the "scientific standpoint", and that the philosopher cannot simply presuppose the validity of logic. The relative merits of the *Phänomenologie* or *Logik* as the foundation of Hegel's system have been debated endlessly by Hegel scholars. Where did Trendelenburg stand on this issue? He gives his reasons for focusing on the *Logik* in *Zwei Streitschriften* (24–25). The *Phänomenologie*, he contends, is either an introduction to the system or part of it. If it is part of it, then it should be accorded the significance Hegel gives it: the paragraphs of Part B of Part III of the *Enzyklopädie*,<sup>56</sup> where it no longer plays any foundational role whatsoever. If, however, it is an introduction, then it has simply an educational or propaedeutical function, so that it plays no logically necessary role as the foundation of the system.

Whether one focuses on the *Logik* or *Phänomenologie*, Trendelenburg thinks that the question of the validity of Hegel's philosophy ultimately hinges on its method, its famous dialectic. The dialectic is the method by which the logic secures its transitions, by which it forges the links of its conceptual chain. These transitions are intended to be purely logical, the result of a purely conceptual development, so that one concept or stage of consciousness follows another by necessity. The central question Trendelenburg poses for the dialectic, then, is whether it has the power to make its transitions by virtue of strict reasoning alone. Or, as he puts it in *Zwei Streitschriften*: "Is Hegel's dialectical method of pure thinking a scientific procedure?" (26).

Taking the *Logik* as his starting point, Trendelenburg assumes that the central presupposition of the dialectic is that pure thinking alone can determine its conclusions, i.e., that the legitimacy of its transitions depend solely upon thinking and do not presuppose knowledge from any source outside itself, such as sense experience. For this interpretation he cites as evidence many statements of Hegel, for example that from *Enzyklopädie* §81: "The dialectic is the moving soul of scientific progression, the principle by which alone immanent *connection* and *necessity* comes into the content of the science."<sup>57</sup> On Trendelenburg's reading, the dialectic attempts to realize the classical ideal of a *philosophia prima*, i.e., a philosophical starting point without presuppositions. Hegel did not differ from the idealist tradition in upholding this ideal; he departed from it only in how it is realized: through the dialectic rather than a self-evident first principle. Hence, for Trendelenburg, the basic question is whether logic can have such a presuppositionless beginning, one where thought assumes only its own activity

<sup>56</sup> Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (1830), in *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), VIII, 199–229, §413–438.

<sup>57</sup> Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, VIII, 173.

and renounces all content from experience, such as images (*Bilder*) and intuitions (*Anschauungen*) (37).

Trendelenburg's central criticism of the dialectic—one repeated from many different angles in chapter III of the *Logische Untersuchungen*—is that it cannot realize its ideal of a completely presuppositionless starting point. Rather than deriving its conclusions from pure thinking alone, the dialectic has to rely, constantly but illicitly, upon empirical content. Without smuggling in material from experience, it cannot make its transitions from one concept to another. Throughout chapter III Trendelenburg stresses that there is one concept in particular that the dialectic presupposes in many of its transitions, a concept that it borrows from experience and that it cannot derive from pure thinking alone: the concept of movement (39, 42, 47, 48, 50, 70, 108). This thesis anticipates his later theory in chapters V through VIII of the *Logische Untersuchungen* that movement is the basic concept of metaphysics.

Trendelenburg begins his examination by focusing on the first transition of Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik*, the famous dialectic by which being and nothingness result in becoming.<sup>58</sup> Hegel begins his dialectic with the concept of pure being, i.e., with being emptied of all empirical content and abstracted from any determination whatsoever. Pure being seems the proper starting point of the dialectic for two reasons: first, because it is the product of pure thinking alone, the abstraction from all content given in experience; and, second, because it is presuppositionless, making no definite assertions about anything at all. Now, Hegel reasons, because to exist is to be something determinate, and because pure being abstracts from all determination, pure being is really one and the same as pure nothingness. Pure being and pure nothingness are identical insofar as they are completely indeterminate, abstracted from all content; they are indeed indistinguishable because, deprived of all content, they contain nothing whatsoever to be distinguished from one another. Hegel insists, however, that the unity of being and nothingness—what both is and is not—consists in both their sameness *and* their difference, in their being the same in having nothing to distinguish them, and in their being different because one is the negation of the other. The truth of being and nothingness is therefore, Hegel concludes, becoming. This is because whatever becomes both is and is not; it is the movement by which being turns into nothingness, and by which nothingness turns into being.

Now, Trendelenburg asks, is this transition gained by pure thinking alone? He does not question that if we begin with the concept of becoming, we can analyze it into the concepts of being and nothingness (38). Since something in becoming both is and is not in some respects, the analysis of the concept of becoming will indeed ultimately involve the concepts of being and nothingness. But the crucial question here is whether we can proceed in the reverse direction, i.e., whether becoming can be derived from being and nothingness when they are the starting point. And here Trendelenburg answers with a

<sup>58</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, ed. Georg Lasson (Hamburg: Meiner, 1971), I, 66–67. Cf. *Enzyklopädie* VIII, 181–193, §§84–88.

firm and clear “No.” Hegel’s own accounts of the concepts of pure being and nothingness, he argues, make it impossible for him to derive the concept of becoming from them. Hegel implies that being is unchanging because he says that it is “identical to itself”, and so forever the same; he also implies that nothingness is unchanging, because it too is “identical to itself” and so forever the same (38). But if being and nothingness are both unchanging and forever the same, how do we get the concept of becoming from them? Both concepts exclude the idea of change, and we cannot get change or becoming from something that does not change or become. If being is static, and if nothingness is static, their synthesis should also be static. The idea of becoming here is illicitly imported from an outside source, namely from experience, from seeing things that change. Although it is proper to describe these changing things as syntheses of being and nothingness, that does not alter the fundamental point that the concepts of becoming and change do not derive from the concepts of being and nothingness alone. We get the concept of becoming as a synthesis of being and nothing only after we have already acquired the concept of becoming from experience.

After exposing the problems of Hegel’s first transition, Trendelenburg turns to an examination of two basic concepts of the dialectic: negation and identity (43). Negation is “the driving force” behind the dialectic, because it shows how one concept depends on its opposite, contradicts itself, and then resolves its contradiction in a new higher unity with its opposite. What, more precisely, is meant by this negation, Trendelenburg asks? There are two possibilities, he answers. One is that negation is purely logical, so that one concept is the *contradictory* of the other (viz., white and not-white). The other is that negation is real, so that one concept is the *contrary* of the other (viz., white and black). In logical negation one concept simply negates what another affirms, so that there is no new concept to replace the one that is negated; not-P is simply the negation of P, i.e., P with a negation before it and nothing more. In real negation, however, one concept (the contrary) gives a new positive concept to replace the one that is negated; thus black has its own content apart from white, left its own content apart from right. Which of these concepts corresponds to the negation of the dialectic? Properly speaking, Trendelenburg argues, neither of them. If negation in the dialectic is purely logical, then it leads to no new result. For between a concept and its contradictory, no new concept arises; the result is nothing, because one concept simply denies what the other affirms. Should I know that something is not white, for example, I do not know that it is black; it could still be red or blue or any other color. If, however, negation is real, there is indeed a new result; but then the question arises of the basis or justification for this result. Should I know that this not-white something happens to be blue, I have to determine this through experience because logic alone does not tell me this. Thus the champion of dialectics faces a grave dilemma: if negation is purely logical, it yields no result; and if it is real, it yields results but only by going outside the realm of pure thought and into that of experience (56–57).

In section 2 of chapter III Trendelenburg gives several examples of how Hegel’s concept of negation works and yields its results only by confusing logical negation with analogous

physical concepts. One of his plainest and most important examples is Hegel's discussion of the concept of being-for-itself in paragraphs §§96–98 of the 1830 *Enzyklopädie*.<sup>59</sup> Being-for-itself is being insofar as it is one independent thing among many other independent things; it maintains its identity by excluding these others from itself. But the one and the many, though they exclude one another, are also interdependent: the one becomes many by dividing itself through repulsion; and the many becomes one through attraction. The dialectic by which the one becomes many, and the many becomes one, works, Trendelenburg argues, only by illicitly importing physical or empirical analogies. The concepts of attraction and repulsion, which are central to this dialectic, are ultimately physical or empirical concepts, because they imply spatial and temporal motion, i.e., they make no sense unless we conceive things drawing closer to one another or moving apart from one another (48). On no account do these concepts derive from pure logic alone. Understood purely logically, the concept of self-negation is that of self-contradiction, which is not the same as the concept of self-repulsion. While self-contradiction has no result, because what is affirmed is also denied, self-repulsion leads to the inner division of a thing. In exposing this confusion of logical with physical concepts, Trendelenburg was reviving—perhaps intentionally but not explicitly—an old Kantian trope. For, in his battle against metaphysical rationalism, the young Kant had argued that purely logical laws cannot be the basis for the derivation of physical laws because the concept of logical negation is not the same as that of physical repulsion.<sup>60</sup>

The concept of identity, the other basic element of the dialectic, fares no better under Trendelenburg's scrutiny. By the concept of identity here Trendelenburg means Hegel's special concept of a concrete whole, a unity of opposites. Such a whole is supposed to be the result of each stage of the dialectic, which unifies yet distinguishes opposing concepts within itself. Trendelenburg takes as his example of such a concrete whole Hegel's concept of true infinity as he expounds it in §§93–95 of the *Enzyklopädie*. The true infinite is for Hegel not an *abstract* infinite that stands opposed to or beyond all finite things, but a *concrete* infinite that is the whole of all finite things. How does Hegel attempt to derive this concept? He argues in paragraph §95 that the concepts of something and other imply one another: that something is an other to the other, so that something becomes the opposite of itself; such a self-relation, where something relates to itself through its opposite, forms a concrete whole.<sup>61</sup> Trendelenburg finds this reasoning far too thin to support

<sup>59</sup> Hegel, *Werke* VIII, 203–209.

<sup>60</sup> This was the argument of Kant's *Versuch den Begriff der negativen Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen*, *Schriften* II, 165–204. Nowhere does Trendelenburg refer to this text in chapter III of the *Logische Untersuchungen*. A very knowledgeable Kant scholar, it is most likely he knew it well.

<sup>61</sup> The crucial sentence of §95, which bears the brunt of Trendelenburg's criticism, goes as follows: "Etwas ist im Verhältnis zu einem Andern selbst schon ein Anderes gegen dasselbe; somit da das, in welches es übergeht, ganz dasselbe ist, was das, welches übergeht—beide haben keine weitere als eine und dieselbe Bestimmung, ein *Anderes* zu sein—, so geht hiermit Etwas in seinem Übergehen in Anderes nur *mit sich selbst* zusammen, und diese Beziehung im Übergehen und im Andern auf sich selbst ist die *wahrhafte Unendlichkeit*." *Werke* VIII, 200–201.

such a weighty conclusion (60–1). Simply because something is an other to its other, and vice versa, does not mean that they are inseparable from one another and form a unity; they can be completely separate and independent things in every other respect. All that they have in common is the abstract fact that each is the other to the other and something for itself. The concepts of something and other are completely general and have no bearing on the other characteristics of things and how they relate to one another. Again, Hegel simply confuses a logical property—that the concepts of something and other are complementary—with real characteristics of things.

One of the chief claims Hegel makes for his dialectical method is that the order of its concepts is the same as that of reality itself. Allegedly, the dialectic represents not only the order by which we think about the world but the order of the world itself. Logic is the system of pure reason, but that system is also meant to be, as Hegel puts it in the introduction to his *Wissenschaft der Logik*, “the kingdom of truth as it exists without shell and in and for itself.”<sup>62</sup> Of course, such a claim was too grand and important to escape Trendelenburg, who duly examined it in section 7 of chapter III of the *Untersuchungen*. He now asks this question: “Is the dialectical method one and the same as the genetic?” (I, 79). The genetic method follows the order of nature itself, because it explains something according to its genesis and development; it understands a thing as the necessary result of the natural forces that produce it. But this is decidedly not, Trendelenburg contends, the order in which the dialectic develops its concepts. The dialectic follows not the order of nature but the order of our *knowledge* of nature. When it proceeds in the order being–essence–concept corresponding to the three main books of the *Logik*, that is appropriate for the order by which we *know* things, because this is to proceed from part to whole, and because we know things in that order, first from their parts and only later from the whole. If, however, we were to know things as they are in nature, we would have to move in the very opposite direction: from whole to part, i.e., in the order concept–essence–being (I, 88).

Trendelenburg finds it perfectly appropriate that the dialectic moves in the order of our knowledge of things rather than things themselves, and that we accept a distinction between the orders of knowledge and nature. After all, Aristotle rightly taught that the order of explanation is not the same as the order of being itself. Concerning the order of our knowledge, there is indeed nothing to object to in the structure of Hegel’s *Logik*. The only problem is that Hegel cannot accept such a disclaimer, because he wants to identify his dialectic with the structure of being itself. Trendelenburg notes that Hegel himself appears to admit the point when he writes in the first book of the *Logik* that the progress of the dialectic is a return to its ground, and that it ends with what first produced it and made it possible.<sup>63</sup> When Hegel says this, Trendelenburg notes, he virtually admits that the order of the dialectic is the very opposite of that of nature (I, 89). Yet Hegel vacillates and attempts to water down the

<sup>62</sup> *Wissenschaft der Logik*, 31.

<sup>63</sup> *Wissenschaft der Logik*, 55.

force of this concession by saying that the circular path of science is like the circular organic process of nature when the plant produces the seeds from which it was made. But this Trendelenburg dismisses as a mere metaphor, one that scarcely reflects the actual development of the dialectic itself. We cannot think of the concrete idea that ends the *Logik* literally returning to the abstract idea of being that begins it. The most concrete cannot make itself the most abstract, not in the order of nature. All this talk of circularity really means only that the concrete idea is implicit in the concept of being, and that its full development only makes more explicit what was latent and potential in the beginning.

Trendelenburg's examination of Hegel's metaphysical claims naturally brings him to the question of the relationship between the dialectic and the empirical sciences. This has been a matter of endless controversy among Hegel scholars. Some contend that the dialectic is completely autonomous, deriving its conclusions a priori and creating its system by pure thought alone; others maintain that the dialectic presupposes the results of the empirical sciences, and that all that it can do is systematize them or determine their formal structure. Trendelenburg sees the attractions of the latter interpretation: it respects the autonomy of the empirical sciences and does not prescribe a priori principles for them; furthermore, it does not commit Hegel to the absurd attempt to derive a priori specific scientific laws from general principles. "No one claims", he writes in *Zwei Streitschriften*, "that Hegel ever meant for philosophy to suck the entire world from its fingers."<sup>64</sup> Still, Trendelenburg is troubled by the latter interpretation, and in the end argues against it. Its chief difficulty is that it surrenders the dialectic's claim to autonomy, i.e., its attempt to derive its results from pure thinking alone, independent of experience. If the dialectic presupposes the results of the empirical sciences, then *ipso facto* it is dependent on their methods, and so it cannot claim by itself to be a sufficient means to determine the truth. If it does nothing more than summarize and systematize the specific sciences, it is nothing more than "a higher empiricism" (91). Thus Trendelenburg confronts the Hegelian dialectician with a dilemma: either he keeps the claim to autonomy, and so must attempt to derive specific scientific laws; or he relies on the results of the empirical sciences, and so has to abandon the claim to autonomy. The dialectic cannot be, on Trendelenburg's reckoning, both modest and autonomous.

For the British Hegelians, Bradley and McTaggart, Trendelenburg had posed a false dilemma.<sup>65</sup> While the reasoning behind the dialectic is indeed purely logical and a priori, its basic concepts still derive from experience. The dialectic makes its claim to autonomy regarding its attempt to determine the *relations* or *formal structure* between

<sup>64</sup> *Streitschriften*, 17.

<sup>65</sup> F.H. Bradley, *The Principles of Logic*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), II, 409–410. John McTaggart, *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic*, second edition (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), 32–34. McTaggart explicitly takes issue with Trendelenburg's interpretation in the second edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen*. Bradley's and McTaggart's defense of Hegel has been recently revived by Hans-Jürgen Lachmann, "Trendelenburgs Hegelkritik", *Trendelenburgs Wirkung*, 25, 35.



concepts; but it does not attempt to create *ab ovo* these concepts themselves, which ultimately have to derive from experience. According to Bradley and McTaggart, Trendelenburg makes the false assumption that the dialectic somehow creates the content of its reasoning, when in fact all that it does is restructure the content that has already been given to it in experience. As McTaggart neatly put it: "...the dialectic must be looked on as a process, not of construction, but of reconstruction".<sup>66</sup>

There is an extent to which McTaggart and Bradley are right to correct Trendelenburg. Sometimes he writes as if the dialectic works by generating its content *a priori*. Furthermore, there is no need for the claim to autonomy to extend to the deduction of the *content* of experience; that claim can be limited simply to determining the formal relationships between propositions, regardless of their origin. It is noteworthy, however, that the validity of none of Trendelenburg's specific criticisms depend on his general account of the dialectic. For his discussion of the validity of the transitions between concepts deals strictly with their logical relationships alone. However misleading Trendelenburg's general interpretation of the dialectic might be, the chief target of his criticism is Hegel's specific transitions, his attempt to develop *necessary logical connections* between specific concepts, wherever they come from. The validity of these criticisms is not impaired or imperiled by Trendelenburg's general account of how the dialectic works.<sup>67</sup> Trendelenburg pinpoints, time and again, Hegel's failure to establish the purely logical connections he intends; and to that extent his criticism of Hegel can be regarded as purely immanent.

It is even more interesting that Trendelenburg already anticipated, and rejected, Bradley's and McTaggart's interpretation of the dialectic. According to Bradley and McTaggart, the dialectic presupposes an original concrete intuition of the whole of our experience, and it attempts to restore that concreteness by showing how all concepts are false abstractions from it. In section 8 of chapter III of the *Logische Untersuchungen* Trendelenburg himself suggests just such an interpretation. According to his reading, the dialectic consists essentially in the movement whereby concreteness is restored to abstraction. It moves from the abstract to the more concrete, and it ends only when it finally reconstitutes the whole of intuition from which all concepts were originally abstracted. It is the very essence of abstraction that it analyzes and takes apart what is originally given as one in intuition. The dialectic attempts to synthesize what has been lost through analysis. It finds the meaning of each part by showing how it depends on the whole; and it continues until it reconstructs the original whole from which all concepts are abstracted. Trendelenburg thinks that this interpretation is indeed accurate, and that it represents nothing less than "the secret of the dialectical method" (I, 95). It is noteworthy, however, that he insists this interpretation still cannot secure the strong claims Hegel makes for his method. There are several reasons why:

<sup>66</sup> McTaggart, *Studies*, 3.

<sup>67</sup> McTaggart realized this, and so felt it necessary to reply in detail to his specific criticisms in his *Studies in Hegelian Dialectic*. See 34.



- First, the assumption of an original intuition does not derive from pure thinking alone, and it therefore means forfeiting the ideal of autonomy—even if that ideal is limited to determining purely formal relations between propositions. For this assumption is necessary not only to give matter and existential import to the categories, but also for the validity of some specific transitions. Thus McTaggart argues that this intuition validates the transition from logic to nature because it shows us that the categories of the logic are abstract on their own.<sup>68</sup> Trendelenburg claims, rightly, that such an interpretation of Hegel's transition goes beyond purely logical relations alone (45, 75).<sup>69</sup>
- Second, this interpretation means abandoning Hegel's claim that the structure of the logic corresponds to the structure of being, for such a dialectic represents only "the history of our subjective knowledge" (95). Since reality is completely concrete, and since the dialectic is only about restoring concreteness to our abstractions, it deals with our cognition of reality rather than reality itself.
- Third, since there are different ways of restoring concreteness to abstraction, the dialectic has to abandon its claim to be the *only* necessary order of thought; which order we follow will be a matter of convenience and perspective (98).

Whatever the ultimate merits of his critique of Hegel, Trendelenburg looked back upon its effects with some satisfaction. In the preface to his *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre* he noted that, since the publication of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, the production of Hegelian literature had stagnated, just as Rosenkranz said, and that the naive belief in Hegel's infallibility had disappeared.<sup>70</sup> What had tainted Hegel's philosophy, in Trendelenburg's estimation, was first and last its dialectic. His final indictment of it appears in chapter VII of the *Logische Untersuchungen*: "... a gnarly arabesque game of abstract concepts, where the capricious and involuted gives the illusion of profundity" (I, 305).

Yet Trendelenburg's indictment of Hegel's method was by no means a dismissal of his whole philosophy. For reasons we shall soon see, Trendelenburg found much to admire in the philosophy. Still less was the indictment of the method meant as disrespect for the man. When Hegel died unexpectedly from cholera in 1831, Trendelenburg lamented the great loss for German philosophy. The passing of his great nemesis revealed his deep respect for him: "Whatever the different views about Hegel, his acuity and power in philosophy remains irreplaceable; and I know no one in Germany equal to him who could take over his chair."<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup> McTaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Dialectic*, 27–28.

<sup>69</sup> Kierkegaard, in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, I, 301n, praises Trendelenburg for making this point.

<sup>70</sup> *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre* (Berlin; Bethge, 1846), ix–xi.

<sup>71</sup> Bratuschek, *Trendelenburg*, 78n.

# Ethical and Political Theory

## 1. Turn to Politics

There are two fundamental sides to Trendelenburg's philosophy. One is its logic and metaphysics, whose chief exposition is found in the *Logische Untersuchungen*; the other is its ethical and legal theory, whose main account appears in the *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik*. Trendelenburg intended to write an *Ethische Untersuchungen*, which would be the counterpart of the *Logische Untersuchungen*. This work would treat the ethical and psychological foundations of practical philosophy. The *Naturrecht* was meant to be only "one practical offshoot" (*ein praktischer Ausläufer*) of this grander project.<sup>1</sup> As it happened, however, Trendelenburg never wrote his *Ethische Untersuchungen*, of which only a few fragments remain.<sup>2</sup> All that he published on general ethics were a few articles.<sup>3</sup> We have a good idea, though, of how he understood the foundation of ethics from the first part of his *Naturrecht*, which discussed the ethical foundation of natural law doctrine.

Of the two sides to his philosophy, Trendelenburg gave *logical* priority to his logic and metaphysics, which he regarded as the basis for his ethics. There can be no doubt, however, that he gave equal philosophical importance to his ethical and legal theory, whose exposition cost him no less time and energy. If his logic and metaphysics were the foundation for his system, his ethical and legal theory was its capstone. Trendelenburg conceived his system in terms of four basic stages or levels of logical development. The *Logische Untersuchungen* covered the three basic stages: mathematics, mechanics and organics; but the *Ethische Untersuchungen* would treat the fourth and final stage, ethics, which was the purpose of all the earlier ones. The *Naturrecht* was the culmination of this final stage, the apex of ethics itself.

Trendelenburg's interest in ethical and legal theory goes back to his early years. Bratuscheck reports that, in the mid 1830s, Trendelenburg began to study natural law

<sup>1</sup> See the "Vorrede" to the 1860 edition of *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1860), v.

<sup>2</sup> For a reconstruction of the intentions and content of Trendelenburg's never completed project, see Gerald Hartung, "Wozu *Ethische Untersuchungen*? Trendelenburgs Grundlegung einer Theorie der menschlichen Welt", in *Trendelenburgs Wirkung*, 82–103.

<sup>3</sup> "Herbarts praktische Philosophie und die Ethik der Alten", in *Philosophische Abhandlungen der Königlich Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (Berlin: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1857), 1–36. Reprinted in *Historische Beiträge* (Berlin: Bethge, 1867), III, 122–170. The other major articles, "Die sittliche Idee des Rechts" and "Der Widerstreit zwischen Kant und Aristoteles in der Ethik", are discussed below.

again, which he had begun in his school days and never neglected.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of his new studies was to provide the basis for his lectures in Berlin. Trendelenburg held his first lectures on *Naturrecht* in the summer of 1843 and repeated them in the winter of 1844–1845. The political events of 1848, in which Trendelenburg was directly involved, gave him new energy and motivation to pursue the topic. Beginning in the summer of 1848, he lectured for several semesters on the history of natural law theories. Part of the point of these lectures was to find his own voice in moral and political theory. For the next ten years, Trendelenburg made natural law the special object of his investigation. The first public presentation of his views appeared in his ‘Die sittliche Idee des Rechts’, a short address he gave to the Academy of Sciences in October 1849.<sup>5</sup> This address presents *in nuce* the basic idea behind his later system. By 1853 Trendelenburg had already developed a sketch of his entire system and lectured on it according to a published outline. All these efforts finally resulted in his *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik*, a hefty treatise which first appeared in the Spring of 1860. An enlarged second edition, which added more than sixty pages to reply to objections and make clarifications, appeared in the Spring of 1868.<sup>6</sup>

*Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik* has been a largely forgotten book. It has found little or no place in the history of ethics, its reputation dwarfed by the success of the work with which it is inevitably compared: Hegel’s *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*. Yet neither on historical or philosophical grounds does Trendelenburg’s book deserve such obscurity. It was the greatest philosophical statement of German liberalism at its zenith, the 1860s. Though it has been forgotten by later generations, it was not ignored by Trendelenburg’s own. The lectures on which it was based were well attended, so much so that Trendelenburg was motivated to repeat them thrice.<sup>7</sup> The book aroused so much discussion that a revised second edition was necessary.

It has been famously said that every philosophy is the personal confession of its author.<sup>8</sup> This dictum is especially true of political philosophy, and Trendelenburg’s is no exception. *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik* grew directly out of Trendelenburg’s personal experience and it reflects his deepest political convictions. The main ideas behind the treatise were conceived in the 1840s, one of the most turbulent decades of modern German history. Just as Hobbes’ political philosophy grew out of the English civil war, just as Locke’s arose from the events preceding the Glorious Revolution, so Trendelenburg’s came from the Revolution of 1848. When that Revolution broke

<sup>4</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 91.

<sup>5</sup> See *Die sittliche Idee des Rechts. Ein Vortrag gehalten in der Akademie der Wissenschaften zur Nachfeier des fünfzehnten Octobers 1849* (Berlin: Bethge, 1849). Reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1871), II, 1–23.

<sup>6</sup> *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik*, Zweite ausgeführtere Auflage (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1868). All references in parentheses to this work will be to this edition. The first number refers to the page, the second to the paragraph number (indicated by the sign ‘§’). “Anm” designates “Anmerkung”, an explanatory note or excursus attached to a paragraph.

<sup>7</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 92.

<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, §6, in *Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe*, eds. Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), V, 19.

out in March 1848, Trendelenburg found himself caught in the maelstrom of events in Berlin. He witnessed the troops firing on the crowd and the erecting of barricades in the *Friedrichstraße* on March 18 and 19. During those dramatic days Trendelenburg led a deputation from the University to the king to plead for the safety of the students. His wife, Ferdinande Trendelenburg, wrote that he suffered sleepless nights and splitting headaches fearful for the imminent collapse of Prussia.<sup>9</sup> Trendelenburg was first and foremost a loyal Prussian who believed that the Hohenzollerns were the very model of enlightened rule. He gave several addresses before the Prussian Academy of Sciences celebrating the achievements of the Hohenzollerns, especially Friedrich II.<sup>10</sup> He feared that all their achievements would collapse and disappear in March 1848, just as they nearly had in 1806 after the battle of Jena.

In May 1848 Trendelenburg was elected to the chamber of deputies for the Frankfurt Parliament, whose goal was to determine a new constitution for a united Germany. There, in the *Paulskirche* from May 1848 to June 1849, he participated in the debates surrounding the future German constitution. He attended all the plenary sessions, and became involved in the work of the committees. He was also elected to serve on the financial committee, whose task was to advise the Prussian treasury. In that capacity he gave a long speech before the Parliament on September 25, 1849, on whether the legislative body of government should have the right to deny taxes to the government—a question he answered in the negative because he felt it could incapacitate government entirely.<sup>11</sup> Trendelenburg became especially involved in questions about the franchise, and in response to them wrote two *Flugschriften*, “Welcherlei Wählermänner wir wollen” and “Ob eine Kammer oder Zwei”, and then a more substantial essay, “Über die Methode der Abstimmung”.<sup>12</sup> The debates at Frankfurt covered virtually all the fundamental issues of modern politics: the source of sovereignty, the basic rights of the people, the role of the people in government, how to treat poverty and unemployment, the place of government in the economy, the relationship between state and church. All these questions had to be resolved; and much was at stake: nothing less than

<sup>9</sup> See Franz Devanter, *Zur Erinnerung an Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg* (Eutin: Struve, 1902), 39–40.

<sup>10</sup> The most important of these addresses are “Zum Gedächtnis Friederichs des Grossen”, “Preussens Wesen in seiner Entwicklung unter dem grossen Kurfürsten, Friederich dem Grossen und König Friederich Wilhelm dem Dritten”, “Über Preussens Eigenart”, all published in *Kleine Schriften* I, 1–26, 78–108, 109–126.

<sup>11</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, p. 207. On this question, see *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik*, §208; 528–529. The speech itself is in “Verhandlungen über die Forterhebung der bestehenden Steuern”, *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen der durch die Allerhöchste Verordnung vom 30. Mai 1849 einberufenen Zweiten Kammern*, Sitzung am 25.9.1849 (Berlin, 1850), I, 414–416.

<sup>12</sup> Trendelenburg published only the last essay in his *Kleine Schriften*, II, 24–66. He did not reproduce his *Flugschriften* because he believed they were no longer of interest in the 1870s. According to Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 206–207, Trendelenburg also gave many lectures on political topics to *Völkervereine*. These topics included constitutional monarchy, the relation between the Prussian and German constitution, the limits of the state in dealing with workers. These lectures do not seem to have been published. For the full bibliographical reference to the *Flugschriften* and the speeches, see Köhnke, “Verzeichnis der Veröffentlichungen Trendelenburgs”, in *Trendelenburgs Wirkung*, 277–279.

the future of the new Germany. Trendelenburg's reflections on all these issues would eventually coalesce in the pages of *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik*. Despite its long parade of staid academic paragraphs, his treatise was the condensation of several intense years of direct experience and engagement in politics.

At Frankfurt Trendelenburg took an essentially moderate liberal position regarding most of the issues facing the Parliament.<sup>13</sup> He saw moderation as a prime political virtue, once describing himself as in all things "immoderately moderate" (*masslos gemässigt*).<sup>14</sup> Like most moderate liberals, who were the dominant faction at Frankfurt, Trendelenburg stood for constitutional monarchy, a restricted franchise limited to males having independent means, and a bicameral legislative house.<sup>15</sup> The moderate liberals championed reform as the *juste milieu* between the extremes of revolution and reaction. They stood to the left of the "legitimists", who defended the old alliance of crown and nobility, and to the right of the "democrats" or "republicans", who demanded the abolition of monarchy, a broad franchise involving universal male suffrage, and welfare legislation for the masses. Trendelenburg was not only a loyal Prussian but also, like all liberals of his age, an ardent German nationalist. He saw no conflict between these causes, however, because they were joined in his conviction that Prussia could be the vanguard and protector of the new German nation. Such convictions brought him into the fold of the so-called *Kleindeutschland* faction, which envisioned a small but united Germany under the Prussian crown. This faction was locked in battle against the *Grossdeutschland* faction, which foresaw a greater Germany, which included Austria, under Habsburg domination.

Trendelenburg's experience at Frankfurt ended in bitter disillusionment. He found the constitution eventually passed by the Assembly too radical, because it weakened the power of the monarchy and widened the popular franchise.<sup>16</sup> But, even more troubling, it soon became clear to him, and the whole *Kleindeutschland* faction, that the Prussian crown was not interested in the cause of national unity. This first became apparent in September 1848 during the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, when the Prussian government, rather than fighting for the German lands in the Danish province, signed a treaty with the Danes. If this crisis was a slap in the face for the nationalists, it was little in comparison with the indignities soon to come. For in April 1849 the *Kleindeutschland* cause completely collapsed when Friedrich Wilhelm IV brusquely rejected the offer to be the first German emperor. Then, to add insult to injury, the Prussia crown again betrayed the cause of national unity with the Olmütz Declaration

<sup>13</sup> See Karl von Prantl, *Gedächtnisrede auf Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg* (Munich: Verlag der königlichen Akademie, 1857), 6.

<sup>14</sup> Bratuschek, *Trendelenburg*, 207.

<sup>15</sup> It should be obvious that this is a simplification of the liberal position. For more details on the various factions at the Frankfurt Parliament, see James J. Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the 19th Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 59–76; and Theodore S. Hamerow, *Restoration, Revolution, Reaction: Economics and Politics in Germany, 1815–1871* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 56–74, 117–136.

<sup>16</sup> Devanter, *Zur Erinnerung*, 44–45.

of 1850, which surrendered Hesse-Kassel, one of its own provinces, to Habsburg forces. After all these disappointing events, Trendelenburg could see no point in fighting any longer for the *Kleindeutschland* cause; he resigned his mandate in June 1851.<sup>17</sup>

The theory of the state elaborated in *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik* reflects the moderate liberal position Trendelenburg developed during his days in Frankfurt. It is essentially a catechism of the moderate liberal's ideal of government. It makes the case for a constitutional monarchy, a restricted franchise, social legislation and a bicameral legislature. But Trendelenburg's treatise defends the liberal cause in an even more fundamental way. Crucial to the faith of all liberals, whether left, right or centre, was their constitutionalism, their belief that the state should be bound by basic principles of natural law. This belief found its most striking embodiment in the constitution eventually approved by the Frankfurt Parliament, the *Verfassung des deutschen Reiches*. In article after article this constitution laid down basic rights (*Grundrechte*) for every citizen, rights such as freedom of speech, conscience, movement, trade and assembly. It was the central aim of Trendelenburg's treatise to defend this liberal faith, to provide a philosophical foundation for its belief in natural law. Such a project was both untimely and timely: untimely, because the natural law tradition had fallen into disrepute by the 1840s; and timely, because the liberal cause in Frankfurt demanded nothing less than its revival. Though faith in natural law was widespread among liberals and fundamental for their cause, its philosophical foundations had been sapped for decades by conservative critics. Natural law doctrine had been under severe attack ever since the conservative reaction against the Revolution got underway in the 1790s. Among its first critics were Friedrich Gentz, August Wilhelm Rehberg and Justus Möser.<sup>18</sup> In the eyes of these critics, and many others after them, natural law doctrine had become tainted by its association with the French Revolution. French radicals had been inspired by natural law doctrine, by the idea that each man is born with certain inalienable rights, and they had used that doctrine as a blueprint to rebuild French society and state, completely disregarding historical institutions and traditions. Everyone knew what had come of that enterprise: anarchy, chaos and bloodshed. Natural law doctrine was further discredited because it had been conflated with the theory of the social contract, which seemed to sanction the right of the individual to withdraw his allegiance from the state if it should conflict with his self-interest. Hence, for decades, natural law had become discredited for providing the bogus rationale for the anarchy and chaos of the revolutionary era.

The greatest challenge to Trendelenburg's attempt to revive natural law came not from these conservative publicists, however, but from another development: a

<sup>17</sup> See Trendelenburg's statement cited in Hermann Bonitz, *Zur Erinnerung an Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg* (Berlin: Vogt, 1872), 29: "Ich versprach in erster Linie für ein festes Preußen, in zweiter für ein deutsches Preußen zu wirken; das erste habe ich nach Kräften gethan, das zweite habe ich nach Kräften versucht. Seit das zweite nicht mehr möglich ist, halte ich auch mein Mandat für abgelaufen."

<sup>18</sup> On Gentz's, Rehberg's and Möser's critique of revolutionary doctrine, see my *Enlightenment, Revolution & Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 288–309, 317–326.

completely new attitude and approach to the law. This new outlook and method appears in the historical school of Friedrich Savigny and Karl Friedrich Eichhorn, which dominated the legal faculty in Berlin since the 1820s. Officially founded in 1815,<sup>19</sup> the historical school grew out of a reaction against the natural law tradition and the legacy of the Revolution. According to Savigny and Eichhorn, understanding the law means not deriving it from higher moral principles but placing it in its social and historical context, showing how it arose from the *Völkgeist*, the history, culture and customs of a nation.<sup>20</sup> Jurisprudence will become a science, they contended, only when it begins to investigate the empirical origins and context of the law, and only when it abandons the search for some fictitious rational foundation in moral principles. The proper subject matter of jurisprudence is therefore positive law, the law as it exists in contemporary legal institutions and as it has evolved in history. Accordingly, Savigny, as presiding head of the legal faculty in Berlin, virtually banished natural law from the curriculum. Natural law was a waste of time, he believed, because it led to endless disputes that only confused the student and obscured the discipline.

Such was the context in which Trendelenburg had to revive natural law doctrine in the late 1840s. He was writing against the current, primarily against the historical school, which was then the dominant mentality and orthodoxy in jurisprudence. Although Trendelenburg does not engage in polemics, there can be no doubt that his *Naturrecht* was a reaction against this mentality and orthodoxy, a defense of the liberal attitude against conservative historians. For he states in the preface to the first edition that his aim in writing the book is to return natural law to philosophy after its having fallen in recent years into the hands of jurists (viii). Natural law was a discipline created by philosophers, and its methods and concepts are strictly philosophical, so that it should now return to its philosophical home. *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik* was a very pointed, indeed provocative, title.<sup>21</sup>

What hopes did Trendelenburg have for his book? What political effects did he expect from an abstract philosophical treatise? In the preface to the first edition he expresses the wish that his treatise will keep alive “confidence in the eternal basis of right, for which the German nation has often testified with the blood of its sons”.<sup>22</sup> The reigning historical school, and the prevalent practice of *Realpolitik*, had virtually extinguished that confidence. Keeping alive a faith in natural law was thus one goal

<sup>19</sup> The school announced itself in 1815 with the first volume of Savigny’s and Eichheim’s journal, *Zeitschrift für geschichtliche Rechtswissenschaft*. See the opening manifesto “Über den Zweck dieser Zeitschrift”, I (1815), 1–12.

<sup>20</sup> The *locus classicus* for these views is Savigny’s *Vom Beruf unsrer Zeit für Gesetzgebung und Rechtswissenschaft* (Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer, 1814).

<sup>21</sup> Trendelenburg seems to have had little personal knowledge of Savigny, though he had read his work during his student years. In his role as president of the Akademie der Wissenschaften he expressed his appreciation of Savigny’s contributions over the years. His attitude toward Savigny is polite yet distant. See his October 25, 1860, letter to A. Rudorff, in Adolf Stoll, ed., *Friedrich Karl von Savigny: Ein Bild seines Lebens mit einer Sammlung seiner Briefe* (Berlin: Heymanns Verlag, 1927–39), III, 291.

<sup>22</sup> *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1860), vi. This paragraph was deleted in the second edition.



of his treatise. But Trendelenburg perhaps nurtured even greater hopes for it. For he suggests, in a loaded remark added to the first paragraph of the second edition, that throughout its history natural law has had a profound effect on political practice (3; §1Anm). This is evident, he says, from the influence of the ideas of Grotius, Montesquieu and Wolff upon rulers and statesman alike. In a long essay written in 1863, between the first and second editions of his *Naturrecht*, “Friederich der Grosse und sein Grosskanzler Samuel Cocceji”, Trendelenburg had explicitly directed this point against the historical school, which had failed to appreciate the profound effect natural law doctrine had upon politics.<sup>23</sup> The historical school had dismissed natural law as mere theory, and it had insisted that all law originates from the *Volksgeist*; but in saying this, Trendelenburg argued, it had too little regard for the facts of history itself. Nowhere was the influence of natural law upon political practice more apparent than in Prussia, when Samuel Cocceji rewrote the Prussian constitution, the *corpus juris Fridericiani*, according to principles of natural law. Reform according to the principles of natural law had always been a Prussian tradition, one going back as far as Leibniz.<sup>24</sup> Thus Trendelenburg wrote *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik* with the hope that its principles would be not only remembered but applied, that they eventually could be the foundation for the new Prussian constitution itself.

Having considered the historical context behind Trendelenburg’s work, we have at least some idea of its intention or purpose. But now that we have treated Trendelenburg’s ends, we must turn to his means and see how he attempted to revive natural law. We must now examine the ideas themselves in closer detail.

## 2. Foundation of Law and Morality

The aim of Trendelenburg’s *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik* was, as we have seen, to provide a philosophical foundation for liberal constitutionalism. Trendelenburg wanted to justify the doctrine, presupposed by the Frankfurt *Verfassung des deutschen Reiches*, that there are basic moral principles behind all politics, i.e., universal and necessary moral principles binding all governments and constitutions. These principles would justify the basic rights and constitutional provisions—or at least a moderate liberal conception of them—enshrined in the Frankfurt *Verfassung*. But to undertake such a task was no mean ambition. Trendelenburg had to answer the most basic questions in moral and political philosophy: “What are the basic principles of morality?”, and “What are the basic principles of political right?” Answering these questions had once been the business of the natural law tradition; but that tradition had become discredited by the historical school of law. Trendelenburg therefore had to swim against the current of his age, to fight to legitimate and revive a nearly forgotten and abandoned tradition.

<sup>23</sup> See *Kleine Schriften* I, 159–240, esp. 223–234.

<sup>24</sup> See Trendelenburg’s address “Leibnizens Anregung zu einer Justizreform”, *Kleine Schriften* I, 241–247.



But for such a mighty task Trendelenburg had a great resource to draw upon, the same inspiration that had sustained his *Logische Untersuchungen*. That resource was, of course, the spirit of the ancients, especially Plato and Aristotle. Trendelenburg's *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik* self-consciously goes back to the political doctrines of Plato and Aristotle, which it intends to revive and revise for a modern age. Now the liberal wine of Frankfurt will be poured into the old bottles of Athens. This conservative spirit appears unmistakably in the preface to the first edition of the treatise when Trendelenburg declares that he will make his work "one member in the greater system of thought of humanity", a system which continues the tradition begun "since Plato and Aristotle" (viii). Unable to resist another swipe against Feuerbach, Trendelenburg contends that philosophy can have a future only by first having a living relation to its past. The chief reason the modern natural law tradition failed is that it lost its living relation with antiquity by attempting to give natural law a foundation independent of ethics. The classical tradition rightly saw, however, that law has to be based upon ethics, and more specifically an ideal of the good life.

As one might expect from such a conservative rebel, Trendelenburg conceived his conservative project as a reaction against virtually every direction in modern political theory. It was first and foremost a counter against the historical school, as we have seen; but it was also conceived in opposition against two other major directions in modern legal theory: contract theory, which bases law upon the contract or agreement between self-interested individuals; and legitimist divine right theory, which grounds law upon revealed religion. The first view was that of the natural law tradition from Hobbes to Kant; the second that of Karl Ludwig von Haller and Friedrich Julius Stahl, who had revived divine right theory during the Restoration.<sup>25</sup> Trendelenburg saw his attempt to ground law on ethics as the rational middle path between these irrational extremes. He rejected both because neither gave an *ethical* foundation to natural law. The first view appealed to self-interest, the second to divine revelation; or, as Trendelenburg put it, the first option lay *beneath* the ethical while the second stood *above* it. The ethical basis of right would rest on the first principles of morality, so that right would be based on more than self-interest on the one hand and less than divine revelation on the other hand. This ethical standpoint was also conceived as the *juste milieu* between revolution and reaction. While the religious standpoint was on the side of reaction, contract theory stood in the camp of revolution, given that the radicals had constantly appealed to contract theory to justify their dissolution of the state.<sup>26</sup>

In the introduction to his *Naturrecht* Trendelenburg explained how his return to the classical tradition put him at odds with another basic trend of modern political theory. Almost all the major modern natural law theorists—Hobbes, Spinoza, Pufendorf,

<sup>25</sup> Karl Ludwig von Haller, *Restauration der Staatswissenschaft*, Zweite Auflage (Winterthur: Steiner, 1820–1834); and Friedrich Julius Stahl, *Das monarchische Princip* (Heidelberg: Mohr, 1845).

<sup>26</sup> This latter association is apparent in Trendelenburg's "Die sittliche Idee des Rechts", *Kleine Schriften* II, 8, 10.

Rousseau and Kant—had presupposed a sharp distinction between law and morals. According to that distinction, the law requires only *external* compliance by one's actions, whereas morality also demands *internal* compliance by one's intentions, conscience and character (10–17; §§8–14). Ancient political theory, however, had never recognized such a distinction between morals and the law. The purpose of the state, Plato and Aristotle held, is not only to provide people with security, so that they could pursue their individual ends whatever they might be, but to ensure that people live virtuously and achieve the good life. Hence the task of education in the ancient state was to create not just obedient subjects but virtuous citizens, people who not only obey the laws but who are civic-minded and have the desire to do good for the community as a whole. Trendelenburg traced the modern tradition back to Christian Thomasius (17; §14); but he also noted that it was *not* found in such early modern thinkers as Grotius or Pufendorf (21; §14), and that it was completely alien to Plato and Aristotle (22; §15). But, whatever its origins, Trendelenburg thinks that it is necessary to reject the modern distinction. He fully recognizes the original point behind it: the need to preserve space for liberty of conscience (18; §14). But this value can be secured, he believes, without having to endorse a general rigid distinction between law and morality, as if the law should have no moral basis at all (18; §14). The distinction is ultimately untenable, he argues, because of the simple and stubborn fact that compliance with the law can be effective and constant only if it proceeds from moral character. If everyone only externally complies with the law in their actions, but they do so unwillingly or even indifferently, their unwillingness or indifference eventually undermines the law (19; §14). No legislator can ever be fully satisfied with mere conformity with the law; for if the law is not incorporated into the inner disposition of the citizen, if it does not become part of his virtue or habit, it gradually becomes a dead letter, “dry wood that snaps under the least pressure”. Trendelenburg gives this striking contemporary example: the U.S. Congress has not been able to enforce its laws about runaway slaves because of the anti-slavery sentiments of people in the northern states (19; §14).

Though Trendelenburg saw his *Naturrecht* as untimely, as an attempt to revive the classical past against the radical and reactionary forces of his day, this self-conception was not entirely accurate. For Trendelenburg did not stand completely alone; he had at least one powerful ally and supporter, though one he could only begrudgingly acknowledge. This was the very thinker he had once so staunchly opposed: Hegel. Hegel's 1820 *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* was very much the spiritual ancestor of Trendelenburg's *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik*. Hegel too wanted to revive natural law and ancient political theory; he too opposed historicism, contract theory and divine right; and he too struggled to reconcile the ancient ideal of community with the modern forces of civil society. Furthermore, both held that the foundation of natural law lies in the concept of an organism; and both share a similar attitude toward history: that reason should be found within it and not in some transcendent sphere above it. Even their political views are broadly the same: advocacy of reform rather than

revolution and reaction, sympathy for monarchical constitutionalism with a bicameral legislature. Trendelenburg supported the liberal spirit of the Frankfurt Congress in much the same spirit that Hegel had once supported the Stein reforms. The affinities between these erstwhile foes were indeed so great that Trendelenburg had to acknowledge them, though he did so in a rather obscure place. There is a revealing remark appended to paragraph §151 of his *Naturrecht*, in which he praises Hegel for his general conception of the state. The acknowledgement once made, Trendelenburg then immediately begins to qualify it by distancing his views from those of his old nemesis. One must distinguish, he insists, between the intuition behind Hegel's views and his justification for them. While the intuition is solid and important, the justification for them is bogus and contrived. Here again the dialectic proves to be the chief bone of contention between Hegel and Trendelenburg. The fatal error behind Hegel's political theory, Trendelenburg argues, is that its dialectic attempts to prove the idea of a perfect constitution. *Contra* Hegel, he insists that we cannot prove a priori that there is only one perfect constitution, one alone that suits all peoples in all times and places. The ideal constitution can be determined only empirically, by determining which is best adapted to the customs and history of a people, the size of its land, the nature of its institutions, the level of education of its people, and so on. Since these circumstances change and differ, so does the ideal constitution.

Given that we cannot separate law from ethics, and given that the law must have an ethical foundation, where do we find that foundation? Trendelenburg is convinced that ultimately ethics has to be based upon metaphysics and psychology (4–5, 23; §3, 27). The question how we ought to live cannot be separated, he believes, from our general worldview, still less our conception of human nature. What should this worldview be? As students of Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen* we already know the answer to this question: it is the organic worldview. Having already defended and developed that worldview in his earlier work, Trendelenburg now believes that he is fully justified in making it the foundation of ethics.

Basing ethics on the organic worldview essentially means that one can apply the concept of an organism to state, society and man. This concept has two salient features: holism, the idea that the whole is prior to the parts; and teleology, the idea that human beings, societies and states have an inner purpose, a characteristic nature and end. Each feature is decisive for Trendelenburg's moral and political theory.

The holism of the organic concept means first and foremost that the state or community is a whole prior to the individuals who compose it (62; §40). Such holism is intended in both a normative and logical sense. In the *normative* sense, it means that the ends of the community ought to take precedence over those of individuals; the priority of communal ends is especially evident in war, Trendelenburg claims, for then the individual is called upon to sacrifice his life for the defense of the whole. In the *logical* sense, the holism of the organic concept means the social and political whole is not an aggregate or *compositum*, i.e., a whole which is formed by the addition of independent or self-sufficient parts; rather it is an organism or *totum*, i.e., a whole which

determines the very identity and existence of its parts. The logical priority of whole over part entails that the individual has his identity only through his community; he does not have a self-sufficient nature apart from and prior to it. Hence Trendelenburg explicitly endorses Aristotle's famous dictum that man is a political animal, either a beast or a god apart from the *polis* (44; §35). On this basis he rejects social contract doctrine, which he charges with reifying an abstraction; it falsely assumes, in other words, that the individual exists as a self-sufficient entity apart from the very community that creates it.

The teleology of the organic concept is especially important for Trendelenburg's methodology. The task of the political philosopher for Trendelenburg is to determine the *idea* behind positive right, i.e., the basic thought, rationale or conceptual ground behind it. The "idea" here is his technical term for the inner purpose of a thing, its formal and final cause (6; §5). Since the idea is no Platonic form but an Aristotelian concrete universal, i.e., the underlying cause and rationale behind the facts, the political philosopher should be neither a pure historian, who determines the facts apart from their inner ground, nor a pure philosopher, who develops first principles independent of the facts of positive law. Rather, he should develop principles that reflect the inner purpose behind the facts, the universal inherent in the particular. This means that the political philosopher needs to test his principles against experience, to see if their consequences agree with laws and institutions as we know them (2; §1). Like Hegel, then, Trendelenburg conceives his method as the rational middle ground in the famous debate between rationalists and historicists about the foundation of the law.<sup>27</sup> He argues that it is false to oppose the historical and the rational, as if the historical were not rational but only custom and precedent, and as if the rational were not historical but only an archetype standing above it (103; §48). Since the rational is the inner purpose behind things, and since the inner purpose realizes itself gradually in things, we should see the rational in history. We should not make the rational into an absolute standard above or beyond the sphere of history, but we should judge each constitution according to its stage of development in history, i.e., according to the degree to which it realizes reason under its specific circumstances.

Before he began to expound his own organic ethics and politics, Trendelenburg had to remove a formidable obstacle standing in his path: the Kantian tradition. Kant had famously rejected any attempt like Trendelenburg's to base ethics upon metaphysics and psychology, and he had insisted upon an autonomous foundation for morals, one founded in pure reason alone. Aware of this challenge, Trendelenburg attempts to meet it in the first part of his *Naturrecht*. His main response is that the Kantian strategy ends in a blind alley. The problem is that Kant's fundamental principle, the

<sup>27</sup> Trendelenburg refers to the famous "*Kodifikationsstreit*" between Friedrich Savigny and Anton Thibaut about the foundations of right, which began in 1814. For a helpful anthology of the writings of this dispute, see *Thibaut und Savigny: Ihre programmatischen Schriften*, ed. Hans Hattenhauer, Zweite Auflage (Munich: Franz Vahlen Verlag, 2002).

categorical imperative, “Act only on that principle that you can will as a universal law of nature”, is only formal (38; §31). It demands that we act on universalizable maxims; but too many maxims, even opposing ones, fit that criterion, so that ultimately we need another material principle to decide between them. Since a purely formal ethics is empty, Trendelenburg stresses the importance of having a theory of the good, a material principle of morality. It is only such a theory, and more specifically a theory about the highest good or the best life for a human being, that provides morality with a content, and so a basis to determine specific duties (71; §44). Kant held that basing morality on any material principle would jeopardize the universality and necessity of morality, for such a principle would derive from experience alone. But, Trendelenburg argues, Kant failed to distinguish between two very different kinds of material principle (73; §44). There are purely empirical principles, which advocate pleasure as the basis of the good life; and there are conceptual or teleological principles, which attempt to determine the concept or idea of human nature. While these empirical principles do lead to relativism, just as Kant feared, the more conceptual or teleological ones do not because they determine the single concept of humanity that underlies its different appearances.

Trendelenburg’s ultimate settling of accounts with Kant’s ethics was his essay “Der Widerstreit zwischen Kant und Aristoteles in der Ethik”, which appeared in 1867 in his *Historische Beiträge zur Philosophie*.<sup>28</sup> This essay is an illuminating comparison between the ethics of Kant and Aristotle, which, predictably, comes down heavily in favor of the ancient philosopher. It is a remarkable feature of Kant’s critique of the material principles of morality, Trendelenburg notes, that it never really considers Aristotle’s ethics. As he poetically puts it: “*Kant geht an Aristotles still vorüber.*” (179). Trendelenburg ascribes this omission to Kant’s failure to read Aristotle himself and to his reliance on superficial secondary sources. If Kant had only properly studied Aristotle, he would have realized that his own classification and criticism of material principles are faulty. Kant had criticized material principles on the grounds that they all assume pleasure as the motive for action; but that criticism hardly applies to Aristotle, who made pleasure more a consequence of an action than a motive for it (185, 207). Aristotle’s ethics was “an ethics of perfection” in Kantian terms, a designation that is not entirely inaccurate, Trendelenburg admits, though he complains that Kant understood perfection as nothing more than utility, “the usefulness or adequacy of a thing for all kinds of purposes” (178). Such a concept gets no grip on Aristotle, who saw perfection not as utility (extrinsic teleology) but as inner purposiveness (intrinsic teleology). The main reason Kant objected to material principles is that they seem to undermine the purity of moral motivation, i.e., the demand that

<sup>28</sup> See *Historische Beiträge zur Philosophie* (Berlin: Bethge, 1867), III, 171–214. All references in parentheses are to this edition. Trendelenburg does not state when this essay was first written; he notes only in the preface that most essays in the collection were first given as addresses at the Academy of Sciences. Even if written after his *Naturrecht*, it represents more fully the views he expresses in it.

we act for the sake of principle or the moral law alone (186, 190). But such a fear is groundless in the case of Aristotle's ethics, Trendelenburg insists, because it too spurns pleasure as the motive for action, and because it too demands that we do the good for the sake of the good (187). While Kant's criticisms fail to find problems in Aristotle, Aristotle succeeds in solving Kant's outstanding problems. Like Schiller and Hegel before him, Trendelenburg finds the main problem with Kant's ethics in its drastic dualism between reason and sensibility, the moral law and inclination. The source of this dualism lay in Kant's severe conception of moral motivation, which demanded duty strictly for duty's sake. That forced Kant to postulate a sharp distinction between morality and happiness, duty and pleasure. He held that *pace* the stoics a virtuous man is not necessarily happy, and that *pace* the Epicureans a happy man is not necessarily virtuous. This heterogeneity between morality and happiness in Kant's system is overcome only in his concept of the highest good, which is happiness in accord with morality; but that ideal is projected into a heavenly noumenal kingdom beyond this life (189–190). Aristotle's ethics, however, has the resources to resolve the Kantian dualism between morality and happiness. Aristotle understood all too well that, though pleasure is not the motive for human actions, it can and should be the result of virtuous activity. Pleasure is not just a sensation or feeling which we passively receive, but it is the completion or perfection of a human activity. Kant failed to recognize that we take pleasure in acting virtuously, that we do our duty not against but from inclination. It was the mark of the noble man in Aristotle's ethics that he took pleasure in doing the good (199).

Whatever one makes of Trendelenburg's defense of Aristotle, it shows that the Aristotelian standpoint of his *Naturrecht* was no blind prejudice or silent presupposition. Rather, it was based on a thorough examination of Kant's ethics. Trendelenburg saw such an examination as the *sine qua non* of all modern ethical theories. For all his differences with Kant, he viewed his work as a model for formulating and treating the problems of ethics (171–172). At the close of his essay he even suggests that the two ethics are not that incompatible after all, that Kant's doctrine of the pure will and Aristotle's concept of happiness, properly understood, complete one another (212). But just what form this super-Kantian-Aristotelian ethics would take he did not explain.

The most potent Kantian objection to Trendelenburg's ethics would be its apparent conflation of value and fact, "ought" and "is". For Kant, as for Hume before him, such a conflation is an utter fallacy. But where Kant saw a fallacy Trendelenburg found substance. According to his organic worldview, there is no separation between the normative and natural, value and fact, because the entire realm of nature and fact is governed by norms and purposes which determine what something ought to be. Indeed, since we can understand what a thing ought to be only by knowing its essence or characteristic nature, the realm of norms and values has to be based upon enquiry into the essences or natures of things (42; §35). The conflict between Kant and Trendelenburg here is fundamental, ultimately resting upon their opposing metaphysics, and more

specifically their clashing assessments of teleology, which we have discussed above.<sup>29</sup> Though Trendelenburg does not explore or explain these issues in his *Naturrecht*, he does make one interesting comment upon them. He noted that a distinction between the normative and natural like Kant's has some dubious metaphysical premises all its own. For it is ultimately based upon his mechanical concept of nature, which assumes that efficient causes alone are sufficient to explain the phenomena (42; §35).

Assuming for the sake of argument that the organic worldview is correct metaphysics, how does it provide a basis for ethics? Since normative principles are based upon the essences or natures of things, it is necessary for ethics to investigate first and foremost the essence or nature of human beings, which is the task of psychology. The shape of psychology for Trendelenburg follows along classical Aristotelian lines: psychology must determine the characteristic activities of human beings, what makes them human beings as such (42; §35). Once we know these activities, we will be able to determine what a person should do. For it is the realization of these activities, i.e., functioning well as a human being, that makes for human thriving, happiness or well-being. Following this classical argument, Trendelenburg then lays down one of his basic ethical principles: *self-perfection*. Plato and Aristotle were perfectly correct, he argues, to stress the value of *self-realization*, the development of man's characteristic capacities as a human being (41; §34). There are three aspects to such self-realization: perfection of the human will or disposition (*Gesinnung*), perfection of insight or knowledge, and the execution or actualization of will and knowledge into a single harmonious or beautiful whole (50; §37).

As important as the rehabilitation of the classical principle of self-realization is for Trendelenburg, he adds to it a connotation that is distinctly modern. Self-realization means for him not only the realization of my generic human capacities, but also the self-realization of my own individuality, my own unique way of realizing these human capacities (54; §37). Individuality, *Eigenthümlichkeit*, was as important for Trendelenburg as it had been for Schiller, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and the early romantic generation. The failure to recognize this value was for Trendelenburg, as it was for Schiller and the romantics, another basic shortcoming of Kantian ethics, whose universal imperatives addressed our universal rational nature but missed our singular and sensitive nature (38, 67; §§38, 41). This individualistic dimension of Trendelenburg's conception of self-realization has important political consequences for him. For it means that the state has to recognize a sphere of individual liberty, the right of the individual to find his own unique way of realizing his characteristic human powers (53–54; 37).

It is on the basis of his ethics of self-realization that Trendelenburg attempts to justify the doctrine of human rights that were so essential to the Frankfurt *Verfassung*. Although Trendelenburg thinks that the concept of basic human rights (*Urrechte*) is vague and poorly defined, he still affirms its enduring value. This concept lays down

<sup>29</sup> See chapter 3, section 4 above.



an ideal, he maintains, that every community and individual should strive to realize (198; §88). Original rights ultimately derive from what Trendelenburg calls “the idea of a human being”, i.e., the concept of what each human being should be. An original right is what allows a human being to realize itself both as a human being and as an individual. The most basic of these rights, Trendelenburg believes, is freedom itself, i.e., the right to determine my course of life according to my own will and not that of another (211–212, 581; §§96, 223). Slavery, he roundly declares, is a disgrace, having no moral basis in any state. His indignation gives rise to the only exclamatory line in the entire book: “*Es gilt, die Idee: kein Menschenraub, kein Menschenhandel!*” (215; §97Anm)<sup>30</sup> In this regard Trendelenburg has no qualms about sharply correcting the great Stagirite, who had notoriously defended the institution in his *Nicomachean Ethics*.

In laying down the principle of self-realization, Trendelenburg had come far in determining the basic principles of ethics. But he still had come only half way. While he thinks that self-realization is a fundamental principle of ethics, he is far from thinking that it is the sole principle. We cannot take the individual alone as the sole basis of ethical value, he argues, because that still leaves out the other side of the equation: the community. While Trendelenburg’s psychology makes him stress the importance of self-realization, his organic concept leads him to emphasize the equal value of the community. It is necessary, he insists, to unite both elements, individual and community. The individual is moral only insofar as he acts for the sake of the community, while the community is moral only insofar as it acts for the sake of the individual (33; §28). From the viewpoint of the individual, the basic ethical need is for what he calls “*strengthening*” (*Verstärkung*), i.e., securing and promoting the self-realization of the individual as an individual; but from the viewpoint of the community, the basic ethical need is for what he calls “*organization*” (*Gliederung*), i.e., ensuring that the whole is harmonious (46; §36). But these viewpoints have to coincide, Trendelenburg insists, so that strengthening is moral only if it promotes organization, and so that organization is moral only if it promotes strengthening.

Although Trendelenburg stresses the vital importance of personal liberty within a community, his concept of right ultimately derives from his communitarianism. The concept of an organic whole meant, after all, that the community had not only logical but also normative priority over its members. Since individuals have their life only in the whole community, he reasons, they are bound to do what makes the community flourish and to forbear from doing what undermines it (76; §45). The right to apply force, the constraint involved in the law, comes from “the ethical power of the whole”. Hence Trendelenburg defines right as follows: “*the totality of those universal*

<sup>30</sup> This passage was directed against the institution of slavery in the southern states of the United States. See the previous page 214; §97Anm. It appears in the first edition, which was published in 1860, before the American civil war; it also appears in the second edition, published in 1868, after the defeat of the Confederacy and Emancipation. Evidently, Trendelenburg still felt the sentiments timely in 1868. The rest of the “Anmerkung” is a pointed and passionate critique of racial prejudice, a clear example of his liberal sentiments.



*determinations of action, through which it happens that the ethical whole and its organization can be preserved and promoted*’ (83; §46).<sup>31</sup> Right is therefore that attribute of a law that makes it necessary for “the security of the ethical whole”, or that makes it “a function of the whole for the maintenance of its inner purpose” (86; §46). This concept of right is to be distinguished, Trendelenburg insists, from contract theory, according to which right derives entirely from the agreement between consenting individuals (85, 227; §§46, 104). If this were the basis of right, the social whole could be dissolved as soon as it ceased to serve the self-interests of the individuals who compose it. To avoid such potential anarchy, we should view right as flowing from the community itself, not the wills of individuals. The rights of individuals flow from their duties toward the community, and the community is not simply a device to guarantee their rights (86; §46). Even natural rights, Trendelenburg stresses, have part of their basis in the community. The organic state means that the individual is not only an end but also a means; he has rights against the state only insofar as the state also has rights against him (196; §87).

Trendelenburg’s organic theory of right postulates a harmonious relationship between community and individual. The organic concept means that individual and community are reciprocally means and ends: the individual is a means for communal ends, while the community is also a means for the protection of individual rights (196; §87). In this way Trendelenburg believed he could do justice to both sides of the ethical equation, the rights of the individual and the ends of the community. But his insistence on the normative priority of the community makes it seem as if the community could, in cases of conflict, violate the rights of the individual. Trendelenburg thinks that this is indeed the case: the state has the right to demand the sacrifice of individuals for its self-defense (592; §229); the right to expropriate for the common good (220; §100); the right to nullify contracts between private persons should they conflict with the morals of the state (235; §107); and the right to limit freedom of press in cases of libel and public safety (533; §210). The crucial question, of course, is how far the state can go in abrogating or limiting individual rights. To a large extent Trendelenburg thinks that there is no clear line, and where it is drawn depends on the circumstances. It is still clear to him, however, that there are certain absolute limits to state power over the individual. No state should have the right to enslave people (211–12; §96), to persecute them for the sake of religion (397; §172), to impose total censorship on freedom of speech and press (534; §210), or to take someone’s property without compensation (221; §101). In placing such limits on state power we can see the abiding core of Trendelenburg’s liberal convictions.

<sup>31</sup> One obvious objection to Trendelenburg’s definition is that it is too broad, because not all norms dealing with the common good or public welfare concern justice. Trendelenburg replied to this objection in his “Die Definition des Rechts. Zur Kritik und Erwiderung”, which appeared in the *Kritische Vierteljahrsschrift für Gesetzgebung und Rechtswissenschaft* IV (1862), 76ff. (Later published in *Kleine Schriften* II, 81–90). Trendelenburg claims that it is difficult to make a sharp distinction between laws governing public welfare and those involving justice. Norms protecting or promoting the common good become part of the system of justice. We speak of laws regarding education, for example, as “*Schulrecht*”.

Although Trendelenburg recognizes that there can be conflicts between community and individual, his organic concept still means that, normally or on the whole, there is a harmony between them. If this seems naive, we must keep in mind the concept of human nature that sustains it. Normally, there is no conflict between individual and community, Trendelenburg assumes, because each human being is a social and political animal who realizes its nature only in and through the community. We become who we are in living for the community, in internalizing its cultural traditions and ethical values, and not in chasing after our individual private interests. We assume that there is persistent and irreconcilable conflict, he argues, only if we illicitly retain the atomistic conception of human nature, according to which each person is a selfish and self-interested agent apart from and prior to the community.

Though an optimist about the harmony between individual and community, Trendelenburg was always a realist about the need to use force to hold society together and to guarantee the existence of the realm of right. It is power alone, he insists, that makes the ideal into something real (78; §45). "Power in itself is not right; but right must be power if right is to be more than a floating idea" (136; §56). Power is indeed "the first and last", the necessary means for the very existence or self-preservation of the state (342; §152). But his emphasis on power always falls far short of sanctioning *Realpolitik* because he constantly insists that the value of power depends on the higher values it supports or makes possible.<sup>32</sup> Power is only "the blind foundation" of the state, and as such only a means to a greater end. That end is the development of man, the realization of the idea of human nature (342; §152).

What makes power necessary? Why do we need constraint to enforce the laws? The answer lies in Trendelenburg's less than rosy view of human nature. Although he rejects Hobbes' and Machiavelli's cynical view of human nature, he still thinks that people are naturally self-interested, and that their self-interest often tempts them to disobey the law (126–127; §52). There is for him such a thing as evil in human nature, which consists in this *natural* impulse to follow our self-interest rather than the social good. This impulse needs to be controlled, and the most effective means of controlling it is through creating fear for the consequences of indulging in it. The purpose of the law is to create just this fear by imposing punishment for anti-social actions (127; §152). There are other forms of controlling and directing human actions than the law, viz., custom, public opinion, religious faith, education (123–6; §52); but they alone are often not sufficient to prevent people from indulging in their self-interested impulses. This darker view of human nature hardly seems to cohere with Trendelenburg's Aristotelian belief that humans are political animals who find their self-realization in the community. But Trendelenburg thinks that we must distinguish between our natural and educated condition. Although people are naturally

<sup>32</sup> Trendelenburg's view of *Realpolitik* appears in his 1855 address: "Machiavelli und Antimachiavelli", *Kleine Schriften* I, 27–53. Trendelenburg had studied Machiavelli thoroughly and gives a sympathetic account of his chief writings.

self-interested, their character can be formed so that they eventually acquire virtues to control their natural impulses and learn to take pleasure in living with others (130; §52). Where Trendelenburg ultimately differs from Hobbes and Machiavelli is in his belief in the formative power of education. While Machiavelli was indeed prudent in warning princes about the self-interest behind many human actions, he failed to take into account its proper antidote: education, the power to make the selfish and impulsive into the virtuous citizen.<sup>33</sup>

On the crucial question of the relationship between law and freedom, Trendelenburg accepts the view of Rousseau, Kant and Hegel that true freedom lies in acting according to the law. True freedom means for him self-realization, living according to the idea of human nature; and self-realization comes from living according to the laws and way of life of the community (70; §43). The law is not therefore a limit on freedom but the means toward its realization. Trendelenburg rejects the concept of freedom as the power of arbitrary choice (*Willkür*), i.e., the power of the individual to choose between a multitude of options. He admits that constraint does limit freedom in this sense, but he adds that this does not constitute a limitation of freedom in the true sense (70; §43).

Although his theory of the law has clear debts to Kant and Hegel, Trendelenburg rejects their theories of punishment. The Kantian theory sees the justification for the use of coercion in its serving as a hindrance to a hindrance to freedom. Unright happens whenever there is some hindrance to the lawful use of someone's freedom; and the purpose of the law is to prevent such a hindrance.<sup>34</sup> The problem with this view, Trendelenburg finds, is that it is more a theory of the limits of coercion than a theory of punishment, i.e., it is a justification for the prevention of possible unright actions and less a theory about why we should punish actual ones (138; §57). The Hegelian theory regards the justification for punishment in the rational will of the criminal, who would will as a universal law the use of sanctions to uphold the very law violated by himself.<sup>35</sup> While Trendelenburg agrees with the spirit of Hegel's view—that punishment should recognize and realize the personality of the criminal, which consists in his rational will (141; §60)—he does not think that it really answers the question why we have a right to punish the criminal. For what gives us the right to respond to his violation of right with a violation of his own right? Simply to say that the criminal accepts his punishment is not to say why that punishment is justified in the first place (139; §57). The ultimate rationale for punishment, in Trendelenburg's view, can only lie in its moral value, in the need for the life and ends of the community to prevail. "Everything finally rests on the fact that we preserve the moral in the mores (*das Sittliche in der Sitte*)..." (151; §67).

<sup>33</sup> "Machiavelli und Antimachiavelli", *Kleine Schriften* I, 48–49.

<sup>34</sup> Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten* §D, *Schriften* VI, 231.

<sup>35</sup> Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts* (1821), *Werke* VIII, 190, §100.

Since the final justification of punishment lies in preserving and promoting the ends of the community, the purpose of punishment should be, Trendelenburg argues, the rehabilitation of the criminal. The more quickly and effectively we rehabilitate the criminal, the sooner we restore him to the community, which has the duty to care for each of its members. "Punishment should heal the sick member and give it back healthy to civil life" (156; §39). However, he fully admits: "Such a task is great and difficult." To make the purpose of punishment rehabilitation raises the hoary problem of the right of capital punishment (*Todstrafe*). After all, a dead criminal is not a reformed one. Trendelenburg briefly grapples with this problem in a single paragraph (159; §70), though he comes to no unambiguous conclusion. He stresses that the ultimate goal of a community should be the abolition of capital punishment. To take a human life is only justified in cases of necessity where the rule of law itself is in danger (*ein Nothstand des Rechts*). There is also the danger that there is a miscarriage of justice and the state kills someone who proves to be innocent. These liberal remarks are quickly tempered, however, by concessions to the opposing view. Criminals who commit capital crimes have forfeited their own right to live, and then there is the "question of proportionality", viz., that punishment should fit the crime. But the full implications of these remarks Trendelenburg does not explore.

### 3. Theory of the State

Basic to Trendelenburg's political philosophy is his theory of the state. This theory comprises the central core of *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik*, section C of Part II, some 150 pages, by far the longest section in the book. In this section Trendelenburg tackles virtually every question facing the liberal about the limits and ends of the state. All the grand questions debated in the Frankfurt Parliament—the relations of church and state, nation and state, the role of the state in the economy, "the social question", freedom of press, the limits of representation and the franchise—now find their exacting philosophical treatment.

Predictably, the guiding theme behind Trendelenburg's theory of the state is his organic metaphor. True to his organic worldview, Trendelenburg conceives of the state as an organism. Though this is exactly what we expect, Trendelenburg gives his organic concept a surprising twist in his theory of the state. Namely, the state is for him not just any organism, or a *sui generis* organism, but fundamentally a *human* organism. It is nothing less than "an ideal man", "a man writ large" (*ein Mensch im Grossen*), the *macroanthropos* of Plato and Aristotle.<sup>36</sup> Just as each human being is a single organism that consists in many living parts, so the state is a single human being that consists in many particular human beings. Trendelenburg takes his metaphor so far that he thinks that the different parts of the state can be understood as the parts of a single

<sup>36</sup> Trendelenburg first states this concept in his 1849 "Die sittliche Idee des Rechts", *Kleine Schriften* II, 16, 19. It plays a major role throughout his *Naturrecht*.

human being. Hence the government is its intellect, the sciences its knowledge, the arts its abilities and talents, the military its capacity to defend itself (329; §151).

Trendelenburg does not believe, of course, that the state literally is a gigantic human being having arms, legs and a torso. The idea of the state as a human being is a fiction for him; it is, however, a necessary fiction, one that legal theory cannot avoid. The rationale behind the fiction becomes apparent from Trendelenburg's account of legal entities (251–7; §111). It lies in the very nature of the ethical, he explains, that we treat a social whole—a family, church, corporation or state—as *if* it acts according to one will. The end, goal or ideals of the organization is represented through the will of a single individual. This individual might be the chief priest of a church, the president of a university, the leader of a political party. They are in reality simply a single individual person; but in their capacity as the head of the organization it is not their individual will that matters but their will as representative of the organization as whole. Such organizations, which we understand as having a single will, then become what is called a *legal person* (*juristische Person*) (253; §111). So when Trendelenburg talks about the state as a man, what he has in mind is its status as a legal person, a being that the law needs to treat as if it acts according to one will.

Though only a metaphor, the idea of the state as man plays a crucial role throughout Trendelenburg's political theory. The state as man represents more than simply the will of the body politic as a whole; it also represents something more universal, namely “the idea of man” or “humanity as such”. The particular state that is a man writ large represents the ideal of humanity as it is embodied in a particular time and place, or as it appears according to specific circumstances viz., geography, customs, morals, language and religion. The state as man therefore plays fundamentally an ethical role, i.e., it serves as a constant reminder for monarch, statesman and bureaucrat alike of the fundamental goal of the state: to realize the essential and individual nature of each human being. This metaphor therefore means that the idea of man is “the measure and standard of the state” (331; §151 Anm).

From his metaphor Trendelenburg draws weighty political conclusions. One such conclusion is his account of the fundamental goal or ideal of the state. What is good for an individual human being, he thinks, is also good for the state. So just as each mature human being should be self-sufficient, capable of taking care of itself and directing its own activities, so each nation should be self-sufficient, capable of living off its own resources and sovereign in its own affairs (328; §151). The chief goal of each state should be, therefore, *autarky*, i.e., political and economic self-sufficiency. Trendelenburg conceives of autarky in nationalistic terms, so that it represents the ideal of national self-determination. In his ideal world each nation is autonomous, self-governing, and secure from foreign interference or domination. But this was, he realized, only the ideal world. It is striking how far Trendelenburg was willing to go in securing autarky in the real world. A state had the right not only to defend itself but also to attack another state if that were necessary for its security. Friedrich II of Prussia was fully justified in pursuing his aggressive policies, he believes, because only

that would secure Prussia against its jealous neighbors.<sup>37</sup> Regarding international relations, Machiavelli was unfortunately right: a state caught between ambitious powers was doomed. Autarky thus justified even *Realpolitik*.

Another no less weighty conclusion is Trendelenburg's theory of sovereignty. If the state is a single man who acts with one will, its sovereignty should be indivisible (493; §203). While Trendelenburg fully recognizes the need to divide the business of state into distinct functions or powers—he divides it into the legislative, executive, judicial and military—he is opposed to the doctrine of the balance of powers. A division of the state into separate but equal powers is for him only a recipe for paralysis or chaos. The ideal of unity and indivisible sovereignty is best realized in and represented by a single person. That person should be a monarch.<sup>38</sup> It should be indeed a *hereditary* monarch, because only a single ruling family stands above party strife and ensures continuity and stability over the generations (548–551; §213). For Trendelenburg, a staunch royalist, Friedrich Wilhelm IV was the very embodiment of the state, the *Macroanthropos* in flesh and blood.

Despite his defense of hereditary monarchy, Trendelenburg did not use his metaphor to defend *absolute* monarchy. An absolute monarchy is defensible when a state is being founded, and when its people are not very educated or enlightened; but a more educated people, and a more complex body politic, make it necessary to have representative institutions (494; §203). His liberal convictions were for a constitutional monarchy, one where the monarch executes laws that have been passed by a bicameral legislature, whose lower chamber represents the people and whose upper chamber the aristocracy and notables (454–455; §186). Stretching his metaphor to its limits, he now applied the *Macroanthropos* to justify a mixed constitution. Each form of government—democracy, aristocracy and monarchy—corresponds to one characteristic of the ideal man (492–493; §202). Monarchy represents his will, aristocracy his knowledge, and democracy his general organization. So just as the ideal man unites all these characteristics, so the ideal state should unite all these forms of government.

A crucial question for Trendelenburg, and indeed for all liberals in the middle of the nineteenth century, is the precise relation between state and society. To clarify that issue, Trendelenburg distinguishes between two senses of the state (335; §150). The word can be used in a narrow sense for one sphere of activity besides others in the social whole, so that it refers to the government and bureaucracy; but it can also be used in a broader sense for society as a whole. Trendelenburg does not endorse or favor one sense over the other; the two senses represent the two extreme poles between which he attempts to locate his own position. Like all liberals, he conceives the relationship

<sup>37</sup> See his speech "Aus Friederichs des Grossen politischen Vermächtnissen vom Jahre 1752 und 1768", in *Kleine Schriften* I, 63–64.

<sup>38</sup> Trendelenburg drew this conclusion in "Die sittlich Idee des Rechts", *Kleine Schriften* II, 20. In the *Naturrecht* he stated that the ideal of unity could be also be represented in a democracy or aristocracy (488–490; §200).

between state and society in terms of the relationship between state and nation or people (*das Volk*). It was a deeply controversial question in the middle of the nineteenth century whether the state is essentially the same as the nation or somehow distinct from it. Many a passionate debate in the Frankfurt Parliament would revolve around this issue. Having a broad conception of the franchise, democrats tended to identify the state with the nation, where the nation consisted in the will of the entire people, i.e., people of all social and economic classes, peasants and tradesmen as well as aristocrats and bourgeoisie. Having a more narrow conception of the franchise, moderate liberals tended to make a distinction between state and nation: the state consisted in the monarchy, aristocracy, civil service, and the representatives of the estates, the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, whose will reflected the intelligent and educated part of the nation. In this debate Trendelenburg sided with the moderate liberals. He insists that nation and state need one another: the people without the state is a mere horde, the state without the people a lifeless aggregate. The nation is the “carrier” or “bearer” (*Träger*) of the state, while the state is the conscious perfection of the nation or people (326; §151). Nevertheless, despite stressing their interdependence, like a true moderate liberal Trendelenburg falls far short of identifying the state with the nation. He maintains that state and people do not always coincide, and that the opposition between them is often the chief source of change in history (327; §151). We find that the state and the nation even move in opposing directions. The people are in their striving *individual*: they want to preserve their unique customs, laws, religion, language and way of life; but the state in its striving is *universal*: it attempts to enact laws that apply not to one people but all peoples. Though Trendelenburg thinks that the nation lies at the basis of the modern state, he does not conceive of the nation as a homogeneous ethnic body. The concept of a people and that of a race, clan or tribe (*Stamm*) are for him not the same (352; §141). A nation can consist of many such groups and can unite them together. What holds all these tribes or ethnic groups together to form a nation is their common language. The purpose of the state is to develop general laws that apply equally to all the different groups within it.

Like all political thinkers in the nineteenth century, Trendelenburg had to develop a position regarding the role of the state in the modern economy. What freedoms should be given to the market place? To what extent should the state regulate industry and trade? And how should the state deal with problems of poverty, crime and unemployment? All these questions had become inescapable by the early nineteenth century because of Germany’s painful transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy. The introduction of competition and free-trade had created widespread unemployment among artisans and peasants, forcing them to emigrate or to seek work in already crowded cities, which had become centers of poverty, crime and vice. The cities thus became breeding grounds for a rabble, the incendiary materials of revolution. These issues had become especially urgent in the 1840s because of an economic crisis: a downturn in the trade cycle led to bankruptcies and unemployment; and a crop failure in the countryside gave rise to famine. For months the Frankfurt

Parliament would debate these issues, putting them under the head of what was called "the social problem".

Regarding these intractable issues, Trendelenburg once again struggled to find the *via media*. While he wants to give some freedom to civil society and the market place, he also believes that freedom has to be kept within strict bounds. Like most German liberals, he was deeply disturbed by the social consequences of the modern economy, and feared that it would turn all of society into a competitive free-for-all where each strives to maximize his self-interest at the expense of others.<sup>39</sup> It was indeed the very purpose of his organic state to ensure community amid all the dispersive forces of civil society. To secure his *via media*, Trendelenburg makes a strategic distinction between two different levels of activity in the state: individual and collective (348–349; §154). While the individual level comprises civil society, i.e., that realm where individuals attempt to satisfy their self-interest or private needs, the collective level comprises all the powers of government (350–351; §154). Corresponding to this distinction is another between two kinds of value: *national-economic* and *political* (353; §155). National-economic values are those determined by the market place, whereas political values are those set by the state, which are ultimately ethical. The point of these distinctions is clear: by relegating civil society and economic values to the level of the parts of the social organism, Trendelenburg gave sovereignty to the state over the economy. After all, as he reminds his reader, in the organic state the whole is prior to its parts, and so it should have authority over them (363; §160). The business of the state is partly to protect the economic realm, to be sure, so that people have the right to keep their property and to conduct business; but it is also to keep the economic realm within limits so that it does not dominate and destroy the ethical values of the state. Trendelenburg's intentions in making these distinctions appear clearly in the telling sentence: "The lawful state protects the cultural and educational elements against the changing and deceptive values of the market place, which would turn everything into money" (354; §155).

Given his communitarian values, it is not surprising to find that Trendelenburg is more concerned to limit than liberate the powers of the market place. While he is firm that the state should protect private property and promote commerce (239, 357; §§108, 157), the main thrust of his account of civil society is toward the need to take protective measures against market forces which would dissolve the old social and political order. His views about agriculture are remarkably sympathetic to the aristocracy. Fearful of the breakdown of the old landed estates, which were being divided and sold off to the highest bidder, he advocated state intervention so that they could remain in the hands of the old aristocratic families (363–364; §160). Reaffirming one

<sup>39</sup> By German standards it would be a mistake to regard Trendelenburg's position as anti-liberal. Most German liberals rejected extreme *laissez faire* doctrines and were troubled by the social consequences of adopting them; they wanted to maintain elements of the old cameralist state. See Sheehan, *German Liberalism*, 30–31, 85–88.



of the favorite tropes of the old aristocracy, he maintains that the peasantry forms the stable and solid core of the nation—a bulwark against all the destabilizing changes of the modern economy—so that it should be encouraged to stay and work on the old estates (367–368; §162). Regarding freedom of trade, Trendelenburg championed the old system of tariffs and taxes to protect domestic industry (374; §165). Economic self-sufficiency was vital to his organic vision of the state, and so he stressed that economic regulation was necessary to guarantee it (382; §169).

Although Trendelenburg relies much on the power of the state to counteract the evil effects of the modern economy, it is important to see that he does not rely on it entirely or exclusively. Like many liberals in mid century,<sup>40</sup> he advocates the development of many autonomous intermediate groups between the state and the people. The state should encourage voluntary associations—vocational groups, local governments, churches, universities and guilds—because these provide a source of belonging and social solidarity amid all the anomie and competition of civil society.<sup>41</sup> These intermediate groups unite the spirit of the whole with that of each individual. Without them, the individual feels lost and lonely, one among the masses of civil society; the state then seems like “a pressure and burden” (413; §180). Intermediate groups are integral to the very concept of the organic state, which has vitality in each of its parts. It is only the machine state that reduces society down to a mass of atoms and a central government.

About the power of the state to control poverty and unemployment, Trendelenburg was something of a pessimist. To him, the problem of poverty seemed inherent in the modern economy, whose very success contained the seeds of its destruction. The growth of technology and industry had given man much greater power over nature; but that very power led to overpopulation. With greater prosperity, the birth rate grows and the elder live longer; but then there are more mouths to feed when the land is not large or fertile enough to nourish them (384–385; §170). The new techniques of production have made it possible to produce more; but they have also thrown artisans out of work, increasing unemployment (386; §171). The modern economy has created new needs, and more people having needs; but, because of overpopulation and unemployment, it creates less means for their satisfaction (386; §171). Inevitably, despair and discontent sweep through the masses, making them ready for revolution. It is impossible, Trendelenburg thinks, for laws to eliminate, control or prevent this situation. Legislation cuts off one head of the hydra only for another to grow in its place. Nevertheless, he refuses to leave the poor to their plight, and insists that the state take some form of action. He bluntly rejects the position of the hardcore champions

<sup>40</sup> According to Sheehan, “... the creation of associations... became the liberals’ most characteristic institutional response to the social question of the forties”. See *German Liberalism*, 32. One might add: the emphasis on independent associations as a bulwark against absolutism and atomism was an important element of early romantic political theory.

<sup>41</sup> Trendelenburg would stress the point in his earlier essay “Die überkommene Aufgabe unserer Universität”, *Kleine Schriften* II, 165–190, esp. 172–173.

of *laissez faire*, who say that nature, through starvation and disease, will cure the very evil that it creates with overpopulation. To say that, Trendelenburg responds, is simply to condone moral failure (386; §171). It is the responsibility of the healthy elements in the state to heal the sick. The best remedies are poor laws, public works, education and, when all else fails, assistance in emigration (387; §171).

Trendelenburg had to admit that there was a sharp contrast between his humanist ideals and the reality of labor in the modern economy (371; §164). There had always been a tragic gap between the ideal of a self-realized individual, who perfects all his powers and unites them into a harmonious whole, and the dismal conditions of actual labor, which forces a person to repeat dull tasks (371–372; §165). This gap appears throughout history, in many different cultures and epochs, but it had become especially apparent with the modern division of labor and forms of production. The division of labor had divided man himself and had turned him into a machine (372; §164). The crucial question is still, as it always has been, “how the worker in his trade can be secured a human life?” Here, it seemed, that the ancients, for once, could not help Trendelenburg. For the grand ethical ideals of the *polis* were made possible by the institution of slavery, which was morally unacceptable in the modern world. The ancient state is objectionable, Trendelenburg admits, because only a few could realize its ideal of humanity (42; §34). What could make humanist ideals more accessible to more people? Trendelenburg’s answer lies in a universal system of state education, where the state supports, and indeed requires the education of all children, from whatever social class (410, 538; §§179, 211).

Although Trendelenburg stressed the role of the state to prevent and redress the problems of civil society, he would not endorse the solution of the far left to these problems: socialism and communism (358–359; §158). In his sharp rejection of these radical solutions we see clearly the liberal dimensions of his own political theory. It was simply impractical, he argued, for the state to be employer and entrepreneur, to drag itself into the endless details of running businesses. But the main shortcoming of these utopian theories is that they failed to acknowledge the selfish motivation behind so much economic activity. Economic activity needed the stimulus of self-interest, however immoral that might seem. Such is human nature that, without self-interest, people cannot be motivated to work or produce. In the community of goods demanded by communism the moral relationship between work and pleasure would be turned upside down: everyone would want to enjoy more and to work less. Communism and socialism were attempts to destroy, against the idea of humanity, the whole dimension of “individual morality” and “the spontaneous activity of the individual” (358; §158). These ideologies were “the children of discontented times” and they arose simply because of the spread of poverty and unemployment. But it was easier to refute these theories than redress the evils that gave rise to them (359, 386; §§158, 171).

For a liberal in mid-nineteenth century, the question of church-state relations was no less important than that of the role of the economy in the state. For Trendelenburg, this was an especially important issue because his critique of the distinction between

law and morality made it necessary for him to question the traditional liberal separation of church and state. The onus was upon him, therefore, to develop a new theory of church-state relations, one consistent with his general convictions. Trendelenburg believed that religion had a vital role to play within the state. It is the ultimate purpose and rationale of the state to realize ethical ideals; and religion is the most important source and support for them. Trendelenburg sees all religions as fundamentally moral in their content and purpose. All the different religions are so many different ways of achieving the ideal of humanity (55–56; §38). Since religion addresses the imagination and inner feelings of the faithful, it is the best means to prevent moral corruption and to encourage moral development in the state (395; §172). Whatever the religion, then, a complete separation of church and state would be counterproductive for the state, a way of undercutting its own ethical ideals. The state should promote religion because it provides the most spiritual and pure form of its moral ends (393–394; §172). The ideal state is one where there is an intimate bond with the church: “Where people and government meet in one faith there is a personal bond that ties together the whole state” (393; §172).

We seem close here almost to an ultramontane position, to the late romantic view of the unity of church and state. But Trendelenburg’s liberal convictions prevented him from going down that path. Complete unity of church and state is for him only an ideal, a goal that lies far off in the distant future (393; §172). For that ideal would be perfectly cosmopolitan: the unity of all states and churches in a single universal state and religion. But the reality of life makes it necessary to accept the fact that there are different states and different religions. In the face of this reality Trendelenburg can only preach tolerance. Since religion cultivates the inner realm of conscience, and since conscience cannot be compelled but has to derive from the inner heart and soul of the believer, the religious realm cannot be created by legal or political means. So, to recognize the sanctity of conscience, and to accept the inevitable diversity of belief, Trendelenburg is willing to accept something like a separation of church and state after all. He insists that the church not attempt to interfere in the business of the state, and that the state not attempt to establish a religion or to make decrees about its dogmas and ritual (394–395; §172). Theories of the separation of church and state are only stopgaps, conveniences in dealing with the reality of life, the fundamental fact of religious differences; but it is a necessary stopgap, an inevitable convenience all the same. Trendelenburg notes that there are limits to tolerance in any state, limits imposed by its “ethical spirit”, and he cites as a recent example the American treatment of the Mormons (398; §172Anm ). But he then quickly adds that intolerance is never a strength in the state. The stronger the state, the more universal its spirit; and the more universal its spirit, the more religions it permits within itself.

# Aesthetics, Religion, and Pedagogics

## 1. Aesthetics

Trendelenburg wrote very little about aesthetics. All he published on the topic was four occasional pieces,<sup>1</sup> which were also almost all he wrote.<sup>2</sup> It would seem, therefore, that Trendelenburg, like many philosophers, gave little importance to aesthetics, and that it plays little role in his philosophy. Both inferences are mistaken. Trendelenburg gave great importance to art, and there is a deep aesthetic dimension to his philosophy. His organic worldview is essentially an aesthetic one: to see the world as an organism is also to see it as a work of art. But quite apart from the aesthetic dimension of his philosophy, Trendelenburg's aesthetics is very much worth considering in its own right. Though it is not systematically developed, it occupies a unique and original place in nineteenth century aesthetics.

Art played a vital role in Trendelenburg's intellectual development. His aesthetic awakening came early, appearing already during his Eutin days when König, his *Gymnasium* teacher, introduced him to Tischbein.<sup>3</sup> His many discussions with Tischbein and König were the starting point for his own aesthetic education. In his valedictorian address for the Eutin *Gymnasium* he paid homage to the role of beauty in education by stressing how moral and aesthetic feeling are intertwined.<sup>4</sup> His aesthetic sense blossomed in his university years. During the Easter Holidays of 1824, Trendelenburg made a trip to Dresden, where he stayed for five weeks to visit the art collections, the opera and literary salons.<sup>5</sup> Among his literary hosts was Ludwig Tieck,

<sup>1</sup> These essays are *Raphaels Schule von Athen* (Berlin: Bethge, 1843), also reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* II, 233–265; *Niobe. Betrachtungen über das Schöne und Erhabene* (Berlin: Bethge, 1846), in *Kleine Schriften* II, 266–291; *Der Kölner Dom, eine Kunstbetrachtung* (Köln: Eisen, 1853), in *Kleine Schriften* II, 292–315; and *Das Ebenmass, ein Band der Verwandtschaft zwischen der griechischen Archaeologie und griechische Philosophie* (Berlin: Akademische Buchdruckerei, 1865), in *Kleine Schriften* II, 316–333.

<sup>2</sup> According to Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 211n, Trendelenburg gave a talk on Holbein in November 1864 for the literary society in Berlin. This talk does not appear to have been published. The article “Das Zeichnen in den Schulen und die Lehrweise des Herrn Peter Schmid in Berlin”, *Allgemeine Schulzeitung*, Abteilung I, Nr. 42 and 43 (7 u. 9. 4. 1829), 329–341, has more to do with pedagogics than aesthetics.

<sup>3</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 35–36.

who invited him to a Sunday *soirée* where Tieck read from his *Calderon*. From these early encounters with art Trendelenburg developed “a very delicate taste”, as Hume would call it, a sensitive feeling for works of art, for their meaning, structure and media. This is especially apparent from two of his later essays, *Raphaels Schule von Athens* and *Der Kölner Dom*, which provide subtle interpretations of the meaning, form and technique behind these works.

Trendelenburg’s main writing on aesthetics, the only one in any way systematic, is his *Niobe. Betrachtungen über das Schöne und Erhabene*, which he gave as a lecture to the *Wissenschaftlichen Verein* in February 1846.<sup>6</sup> The article revolves around the Greek myth of Niobe, who was the daughter of Tantalus and wife of Amphion. Niobe boasted that her fertility and large family (six sons, six daughters) made her more than the equal of the titaness Leto, who had only two children. For such presumption Niobe was duly punished by the gods, who sent Leto’s two offspring to kill all her family. The slaughter of Niobe’s children was depicted in an architectural frieze on a Roman temple, which had been excavated in 1583. Much of Trendelenburg’s article is an attempt to reconstruct the placing of the figures on the frieze. But it moves fluently between the discourses of archeological reconstruction, mythological interpretation and aesthetic theory. The central thesis of *Niobe* is also the most interesting and original contention of Trendelenburg’s aesthetic theory: that the sublime and beautiful, though very different from one another, are reconciled and unified in the highest aesthetic experience. Trendelenburg does not attempt to reduce the sublime to the beautiful, like the old rationalist aestheticians, Baumgarten and Mendelssohn; but nor does he radically separate them, like Burke, Kant and Schiller. Rather, he attempts to synthesize them, to show how they interpenetrate one another in the most intense aesthetic awareness.

Trendelenburg begins his analysis with a standard distinction between the beautiful and sublime. The beautiful is the experience of harmony, the awareness of something simple, limited and comprehensible. The sublime, however, is the experience of dissonance, the consciousness of something unlimited and unfathomable. When we first see something sublime it shatters our normal concepts and it transcends the limits of our ordinary experience; it is something that we fear and respect, because of its enormous power or size; but it is not something that we love. Yet the dissonance involved in the experience of the sublime, Trendelenburg contends, is eventually overcome on a higher level where a new consonance arises from the dissonance, a higher harmony arising out of tension and stress. This new consonance or higher harmony is a deeper form of beauty. Hence Trendelenburg writes of “the dying away of the sublime into the beautiful” (*Abklingen des Erhabenen ins Schöne*). Trendelenburg’s example of this experience comes from the statue of Niobe on the Roman frieze. When we see Niobe suffering and all her children dying before her, we feel the sublime, a feeling

<sup>6</sup> *Niobe. Einige Betrachtungen über das Schöne und Erhabene, vorgetragen im wissenschaftlichen Vereine zu Berlin* (Berlin: Bethge, 1846). All references in parentheses are to the more accessible version in *Kleine Schriften*, II, 226–229.

of fear in the presence of some greater force; nevertheless, when we recognize that amid such horror and suffering Niobe still remains composed and dignified, as if in defiance of the gods, we feel the beautiful, a greater harmony emerging amid all the strife, a feeling that comes from seeing how humanity affirms itself despite the evils that befall it.<sup>7</sup>

Trendelenburg returned to his favorite theme—beauty within sublimity—in a later essay, *Der Kölner Dom*, which he gave as an Academy address in 1853.<sup>8</sup> The subject of his essay, the Cologne Cathedral, was, without doubt, the most controversial and celebrated work of art in nineteenth-century Germany.<sup>9</sup> Since the beginning of the century, the cathedral had been regarded as the crowning masterpiece of German gothic, as indeed the chief monument of medieval German culture. Yet the unfinished state of the building, which lay in fragments for centuries, had been an enduring disgrace and scandal. In the 1830s the completion of the cathedral had become a *cause célèbre* among German and Rhenish nationalists. In 1842 Friedrich Wilhelm IV and the *Kölner Kunstverein* joined forces to finish the cathedral; and on one fine day in September all the Prussian and Rhenish notables, including Trendelenburg himself, took part in a solemn cornerstone-laying ceremony in Cologne. When Trendelenburg finally wrote his essay the cathedral had been undergoing construction for some eleven years. Though the enthusiasm of the original ceremony had waned, Trendelenburg wanted to reaffirm it on the occasion of Friedrich Wilhelm IV's birthday. After a detailed account of the cathedral's design, Trendelenburg analyzed the aesthetic experience behind it. The main feeling we have on entering the cathedral, he maintains, is respect (*Ehrfurcht*). Respect is a mixed feeling, containing elements of both fear and love. It involves fear, because we sense a greater power that can crush us or a strictness that can punish us. But respect also involves love, a feeling of admiration and trust. Fear is the chief emotion arising from the sublime, love the main feeling deriving from beauty. When we enter the cathedral we feel both emotions; but we also sense that fear eventually dissolves into love. We are at first taken aback in awe; we are overwhelmed by the rising lines moving toward heaven, by massive materials seemingly suspended in air, by the perspective that sends our eyes rushing into the distance. But this original fear and wonder resolves itself into a feeling of trust and comfort; we begin to feel at home in this marvelous new world whose greater aim is to protect and save us. From the original dissonance there arises a greater consonance, a feeling of

<sup>7</sup> This was a variation on Winckelmann's famous interpretation of Laokoon in *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Werke in der Malerey und Bildhauer-Kunst* (Dresden: Walther, 1756). Niobe was a female version of Laokoon, who maintained his composure and fortitude while being strangled by serpents. Trendelenburg makes no mention of Winckelmann in *Niobe*, though he knew his writings well. He cited Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* twice in *Das Ebenmass* (325, 332).

<sup>8</sup> *Der Kölner Dom. Eine Kunstbetrachtungen. Vortrag, gehalten zur Feier des Geburtstages Sr. Maj. Des Königs in der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (Köln: Eisen, 1853). All references in parentheses are to the more accessible edition in *Kleine Schriften* II, 292–315.

<sup>9</sup> On the cultural context, see Michael Lewis, *The Politics of the German Gothic Revival* (New York: MIT Press, 1993), 1–56.

acceptance and oneness. What we once feared would overwhelm and destroy us, now elevates and inspires us. Hence Trendelenburg again invokes his signature theme: “the sublime dying away into the beautiful” (310). The Cologne Cathedral is such a great masterpiece for him because it fuses the sublime and the beautiful. If the sublime is the romantic, and if the beautiful is the classical, then the Cologne Cathedral is romantically classical or classically romantic, “the classical building in romantic style” (314).

Trendelenburg’s closing comments about the Cologne Cathedral indicate something broader about his aesthetics in general. Namely, in the great contest between romanticism and classicism which roiled the aesthetics of his day, Trendelenburg strives for his *juste milieu*, the *via media* between the extremes. We have seen how Trendelenburg, who confessed to being “immoderately moderate”, assumed this mediating role in his ethics and politics; so it is not surprising that he should do the same in his aesthetics. The account that Trendelenburg provides of the classical and the romantic toward the end of his essay reveal that he is indeed aiming at resolving the conflict between them (312–314). The classical represents bare simplicity, what is definite or determinate, what is graspable in a single concept. The romantic, however, strives after sensation and feeling, which is indefinite and indeterminate, eluding comprehension in concepts. There is justice on each side of this dispute, Trendelenburg suggests, because the classical and romantic each represent an enduring and necessary element in all works of art. But it follows from this that the best work of art would be one like Niobe or the Cologne Cathedral, one which manages to wed freedom with restraint, the indeterminate with the determinate, feeling with conceptual precision.

Such a mediating program reflects the very different forces at work behind Trendelenburg’s aesthetics, which was equally influenced by the classical and romantic traditions. Trendelenburg shared many of the doctrines espoused by the neo-classical tradition of Wolff, Gottsched, Baumgarten, Winckelmann, Mendelssohn and Lessing. This tradition had been inspired by the Platonic doctrine that beauty is the sensible perception of intellectual form. Beauty was the *intuitio perfectionis*, the sensible representation of perfection, which consists in unity in variety. Trendelenburg reaffirmed this very doctrine in his *Niobe*, where he argues that beauty consists in the sensible perception of truth, which consists in the realm of form, structure and law grasped by the understanding (273–278). A very similar doctrine surfaces in his *Das Ebenmass*,<sup>10</sup> which reveals even more clearly the classical roots of his aesthetic doctrine. Here Trendelenburg goes back to the *Phaedrus* and insists in classical Platonic fashion that the artist grasps the intelligible form behind appearances (318). The artist does not copy reality as it is given to him, but he shows it in its perfection according to its archetype. “In the refashioning of things the Greek artist supplied what the Greek philosopher missed in appearing things. The same spirit works in both.” (320)

<sup>10</sup> *Das Ebenmass. Ein Band der Verwandschaft zwischen der griechischen Archaeologie und griechischen Philosophie. Festgruß an Eduard Gerhard am 30. Juli 1865* (Berlin: Akademische Buchdruckerei, 1865). All references in parentheses are to the edition in *Kleine Schriften* II, 316–333.

The romantic influence on Trendelenburg is no less apparent than the classical. The guiding idea behind the early romantic program—that we should make all life into a work of art—appears in full force at the close of *Niobe*. Here Trendelenburg writes that whoever sees how beauty and the sublime reveal the greatness of human nature will strive to realize these ideals in life itself. We should make our own lives into a work of art, so that we harmonize the intellectual and sensible sides of our own being. But we should also make all of society and the state into works of art, so that there is harmony between people of all vocations and backgrounds. Though he never mentions him by name, Trendelenburg reinstates the grand romantic vision of Novalis: that the statesman should be an artist, the director of a huge public stage where all are actors in one public performance (289–290).<sup>11</sup> Though no admirer of late romantic mysticism or ultramontaniam, Trendelenburg here reaffirmed the heart of the early romantic program.

The one thinker who does not influence Trendelenburg's aesthetics, the one conspicuous by his very absence, is Kant. In going back to the rationalist tradition Trendelenburg had reinstated the very doctrines once combatted by Kant in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Kant's sharp distinction between aesthetic and cognitive judgment struck at the very heart of the Platonic doctrine that aesthetic experience is an *intuitio perfectionis*, a sensual perception of intellectual form. Trendelenburg reaffirmed, however, not only that rationalist doctrine but another one attacked by Kant: that beauty consists in perfection, the purposiveness of things. The irony is that in the one passage where Trendelenburg does refer approvingly to Kant's aesthetics he violates its central critical intent. In the brief section devoted to aesthetics in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, section 16 of chapter XI, he attempts to explain Kant's doctrine of the free play of our faculties in aesthetic experience in terms of his own organic doctrine. Trendelenburg assumes that there is a harmony between the senses and understanding because the intellectual structure or form of an object, which is given in its inner purpose, corresponds to the manner or order of our perceiving it (II, 160–161). Yet here Trendelenburg still explained the Kantian doctrine in rationalist terms, as if the aesthetic perception were a form of cognition, an awareness of a form inherent in the object. Thus he re-injected “dogmatism” into critical doctrine.

## 2. The Religious Dimension

There is a profound religious dimension to Trendelenburg's philosophy, though it is perhaps the least explicit and developed aspect of his thought. Trendelenburg's reflections on religion are scattered, schematic and occasional. His fullest treatment of the subject is the penultimate chapter of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, chapter XXII, ‘Das Unbedingte und die Idee’. Though, at fifty pages, the chapter seems extensive enough,

<sup>11</sup> See Novalis, “Glauben und Liebe oder Der König und die Königin”, in *Novalis Schriften*, ed. Richard Samuel et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960), II, 364.



it does not reflect the importance religion had for him. The reason for this apparent lapse has little to do with neglect and much to do with Trendelenburg's views about the relationship between philosophy and religion. He believed that what is characteristic of religion—its basis in historical revelation, and its appeal to feeling and imagination—falls outside the realm of philosophy proper. As a devout Protestant, Trendelenburg saw the religious sphere as a deeply personal one, and so beyond conceptual articulation.

One gathers from Bratuscheck's biography how important religion was to Trendelenburg. All throughout his life he remained loyal to the Protestant faith of his family. Apparently, a spirit of genuine piety prevailed in his own household.<sup>12</sup> He often consulted the Bible, and he loved to read devotional literature, especially Thomas a Kempis and Angelus Silesius.<sup>13</sup> In his early years in Berlin he would go regularly to Schleiermacher's sermons, which he greatly admired; in his later years, however, after Schleiermacher's death, he went to church less and less, partly because of the pressure of work, and partly because he disliked the increasing orthodoxy of the Restoration period. Trendelenburg set a premium on freedom of conscience, and it was chiefly for this reason that in 1867 he refused a request of Friedrich Wilhelm IV to serve on the Brandenburg synod. Laying down rules and regulations for the church, he explained, went against his own conscience.<sup>14</sup>

Trendelenburg's best statement of his position on the relationship between philosophy and religion appears in §38 of his *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik*. With the great monotheistic religions in mind (Christianity, Islam and Judaism), Trendelenburg states that each religion grasps the divine in history following a revelation at some special time and place. Philosophy, however, stands above the realm of history, because it deals with universal principles, general concepts that are instantiated equally and indifferently in many different places in history. Philosophy represents the essential ethical value behind all religions, which is the idea of humanity. Each religion determines only one particular form of this idea; but philosophy represents the idea as such or in general, so that it stands to the various religions as genus to species. Because philosophy represents the idea of humanity, and because Christianity is only one special form of this idea, it follows that 1) there is no conflict in principle between philosophy and Christianity, and that 2) Christianity is independent of philosophy because it deals with particular historical events which fall outside the universal and abstract domain of philosophy. Given that philosophy and religion inhabit distinct realms, it is important that these discourses not be mixed together; trying to join them will only result in a "wishy-washy monster" (*eine verwaschene Mischgestalt*). In a pointed metaphor Trendelenburg says against the late romantics: "Philosophical expositions

<sup>12</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 10, 209.

<sup>13</sup> See Davantier, *Erinnerung*, 25.

<sup>14</sup> See his letter to the *Oberkirchenrath* in Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 209.

should be pure classical drawings and should not strive for confusing romantic colors; for philosophy can only sketch the basic contours" (56; §38).

The account in the *Naturrecht* seems to bring Trendelenburg close to a moral account of religion, as if its purpose and content were essentially about morality. He seems on the verge of a Kantian conception of religion, though here the moral principles would be not the categorical imperative but the idea of humanity. It is important to see, however, that Trendelenburg wishes to uphold the metaphysical status of religion, its claim to be about the world or universe as a whole. Upholding this status does not mean that he wants to preserve the realm of the supernatural and mysterious, as the orthodox theologians of his day still wanted to do; but it does mean that he intends to keep the idea of the unconditioned or absolute. His intentions in this respect are especially clear from chapter XXII of the *Logische Untersuchungen* where he defends the concept of the absolute or unconditioned. This concept, he states, is the philosophical expression and equivalent of the religious idea of God (II, 461). God, it seems, is simply a more poetic, anthropomorphic and anthropocentric view of the absolute. *Contra* Kant, Trendelenburg argues that the concept of the absolute or unconditioned should not be given a strictly regulative status, as if it were only a goal for enquiry. Rather, it is necessary to assume that the unconditioned or absolute *exists*, because that alone guarantees the rationality of the universe and the success of scientific investigation (II, 468).

Trendelenburg's retention of the concept of the absolute, and his view of it as a more rigorous philosophical expression of the idea of God, seems to bring him close to the Hegelian view of religion as the articulation in feeling of philosophical truth. But there is little of Hegel's rationalism in Trendelenburg's conception of religion. Unlike Hegel, he denies that it is possible to provide a rational proof for the existence of God, and he accepts Kant's critique of the traditional proofs (II, 465). We cannot demonstrate the idea of the absolute or unconditioned for the simple reason that it is the basic principle behind all knowledge, and first principles are beyond demonstration (464). Although religion is indeed a more poetic form of philosophy, it still indicates or points to something standing beyond the grasp of philosophy: the transcendent. There is a transcendent dimension to the absolute because, as the condition of the application of concepts, it transcends knowledge through these concepts themselves. Any attempt to apply them to the absolute would presuppose it, and so be circular (464–465). It is just this transcendent realm that we can grasp through art but not philosophy. The best way to approach the absolute is to treat it as if it were a poem. God speaks to us through the world as the poet speaks to us through a poem; and just as we learn a little about the poet from the poem, so we can learn a little about God from the world (494).

Trendelenburg's conception of religion was a peculiar mixture of the Protestant and the Platonic. While its Protestant aspect appears in its emphasis on God's transcendence, its Platonic aspect emerges in its concept of providence. Trendelenburg would often reaffirm Plato's doctrine in the *Timaeus* that God rules the world according to

the form of the good. The entire universe formed a kingdom of ends, and these ends were so many forms of the good. To act according to these ends was to fulfill one's place in life and to make the good a reality. In *De Platonis Philebi consilio*, his inaugural lecture as *Ordinarius*, Trendelenburg maintained that the idea of the good expresses the essence of God; it is the idea God forms of himself and then realizes in the universe.<sup>15</sup> Here we seem to find Trendelenburg at his most rationalist; it is as if the transcendent aspect of the divine disappears entirely in the form of the good, which is the very essence of God. And yet even here Trendelenburg is not as rationalist as he seems. There still remains a transcendent dimension to his conception of God. For he refuses to identify God simply with his essence; he is also an agent, a living force that brings the good into existence. It is also noteworthy that in just this context Trendelenburg criticizes Hegel for claiming that God exists only in and through his manifestation in history and human self-consciousness. Somehow God exists apart from and prior to his manifestations, and so transcends them. And so the *deus absconditus* of the Protestant tradition still remains.

### 3. Trendelenburg as Educator

No account of Trendelenburg's intellectual career would be complete without some mention of his central role in Prussian education. Taking a broader historical perspective, looking away for a moment from the narrow focus of the history of philosophy, it soon becomes clear that Trendelenburg was more influential as an educator than as a philosopher. Indeed, there was probably no more influential figure in Prussian education in the middle nineteenth century. Trendelenburg's role as educator was not limited to the lecture hall or seminar room. He was so valued for his probity, diligence and tact that he was frequently elected or appointed to the highest posts in the University of Berlin. He was elected *Dekan* five times (1842, 1845, 1853, 1859, 1868) and *Rektor* three times (1845, 1856, 1863). He became a member of the Academy of Sciences in 1846, and then became the Secretary for its Philosophical and Historical Section, working in that capacity for twenty-five years. Last but not least, he served for thirty-two years as a member of the examination committee (*Prüfungskommission*) for the Prussian Ministry of Education, where his task was to examine students in German and philosophy. He was the leader of that committee for over twelve years, from 1847 to 1860. Such was his success on this committee that, in 1858, he was asked to succeed Schulze as the Minister of Education, though he declined the post because it would take him too far from his academic interests.

Trendelenburg's services in behalf of education were not only practical but also theoretical. One of his major interests was the philosophy of education—what was then called "*Pädagogik*"—and he lectured regularly on the topic for many years.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> See *De Platonis Philebi consilio*, 17–22n42. Cf. Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 85.

<sup>16</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 92.

Trendelenburg gave such importance to the philosophy of education for both moral and political reasons. From a moral standpoint, education was the most important application of ethics, because ethical values are realized only in and through education. It is only through education that we become self-realized individuals and citizens. From a political standpoint, the state has to be held together not simply through the force of its laws but also through the ethical disposition of its citizens, which is created only through education.

Like all spheres of his thought, Trendelenburg's philosophy of education is inspired by his classicism. Fundamental to philosophy of education, he insists, are the works of Plato and Aristotle.<sup>17</sup> They gave the highest importance to education, and they remind us constantly that its importance should not be lost sight of in the contemporary world.

Trendelenburg published little on the philosophy of education. His lectures on *Pädagogik* remained in manuscript, and regarding their contents we have to rely on Bratuscheck, who gives only a sketchy summary. We have several speeches he gave in his official role as *Rektor*, which state some of his beliefs about education.<sup>18</sup> These speeches are very much *pieces d'occasion*, however, which do not attempt to expound a systematic philosophy of education. Their purpose is more practical than theoretical. They were written to encourage students, to celebrate the founders of the university, or to recall its history.

When Trendelenburg lectured and wrote about *Pädagogik* the great age of educational thought in Germany was already becoming a rapidly fading memory. Trendelenburg prized the achievements of that age, and he was very self-conscious that he was its heir. His chief mission was simply to preserve its legacy. That golden age began in the late 1790s and early 1800s when some of the greatest philosophers in Germany—Kant, Schiller, Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, Wilhelm von Humboldt—called for a reform of the German university system.<sup>19</sup> The old system had given pride of place to vocational learning—the university was a training ground for a career in law, medicine or the ministry—and the liberal arts were studied in the first years only as general preparation. The philosophers wanted to turn that world

<sup>17</sup> "Erinnerungen der Universität und die Höhe des akademischen Studiums", in *Kleine Schriften* II, 224–232.

<sup>18</sup> See the following essays, all published in *Kleine Schriften*: "Die überkommene Aufgabe unserer Universität", II, 165–190; "Gedächtnissrede am Geburtstage des Stifters der Universität des Königs Friedrich Wilhelm III", II, 145–164; "Erinnerungen der Universität und Höhe des akademischen Studiums", II, 224–232; "Zur Erinnerung an Johann Gottlieb Fichte", II, 191–223.

<sup>19</sup> The basic writings are Kant, *Der Streit der Fakultäten*, *Schriften*, ed. Prussian Academy of Sciences (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1902f), VII, 1–116; Fichte, *Deducirter Plan einer zu Berlin errichtenden höheren Lehranstalt* (1807), *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. I.H. Fichte (Berlin: Veit, 1845–6), VIII, 95–219; Friedrich Joseph von Schelling, *Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. K.F.A. Schelling (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1859), I/5, 207–352; Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Über die innere und äußere Organisation der höheren wissenschaftlichen Anstalten in Berlin", in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Prussian Academy of Sciences (Berlin: Behr, 1903–36), X, 250–260; and Schleiermacher, *Gelegentliche Gedanken über Universitäten in deutschen Sinn*, volume IV *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Dirk Schmid (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 15–100. With the exception of Schelling's lectures, Trendelenburg refers to all these works in his own educational writings.

upside down. They stressed the importance of learning for its own sake, and stoutly opposed the “*Brotstudien*”, the utilitarian spirit in education, which would have people learn only for the sake of a future career. The purpose of education, in their view, was not to learn a vocation but to realize the personality, to foster the all-rounded development of the individual. Rather than rote learning, the student should develop intellectual autonomy and independence of thought. All these philosophers, true to their own vocation, gave the greatest importance to philosophy in the curriculum. For centuries philosophy had belonged to the lower faculty in all German universities, where it was mere preparation for the higher faculties of medicine, law and theology. The philosophers would now make this servant into the queen. For it was philosophy which taught the student to think for himself, which allowed him to grasp the fundamentals of all disciplines, and which gave him a comprehensive and interdisciplinary understanding. This platform for reform was, of course, highly “idealistic”, perfectly fitting for the idealist metaphysics and epistemology of its advocates, and it was far from ever being realized even in the new universities. Nevertheless, it provided for decades the inspiration for many philosophers in German education, Trendelenburg not least among them. In his few writings on education Trendelenburg essentially reaffirmed the idealist agenda. He strongly recommended the writings of Kant, Fichte and Schleiermacher. In their essential values these philosophers were correct; the chief goal was only to keep their ideals alive in an increasingly materialist and utilitarian age.

Though Trendelenburg was very much a preserver rather than innovator in educational thought, he was a leader in one important and surprising respect: he was an early champion of *physical* education. One does not expect philosophers, who are after all devoted to the life of the mind, to be very enthusiastic about the development of the body. But Trendelenburg was a striking exception to that rule. In an early essay, *Das Turnen und die deutsche Volkserziehung*,<sup>20</sup> which he wrote in the autumn of 1842, he championed the role of gymnastics in lower and higher education. Gymnastics had become a political issue in Germany because they were actively cultivated by the *Burschenschaften*, whose leftist views were suspected by the government. During the Restoration the government even prohibited gymnastic societies. The ban against gymnastics had been lifted by Friedrich Wilhelm IV in June 1842, just months before Trendelenburg's essay. The repeal of the ban had stimulated Trendelenburg to think about the future place of gymnastics in German education. One of the aims of his essay is to free gymnastics from its past political baggage, so that it served no one's political agenda but became a neutral but integral part of the curriculum. Yet, somewhat inconsistently, Trendelenburg also sees gymnastics as a useful preparation for the military, especially now that Prussia has instituted a universal *Wehrpflicht*. Gymnastics is the best means to form a strong and courageous soldiery. The experience of 1813 and 1814, when German youth volunteered in droves to do battle against Napoleon,

<sup>20</sup> The essay first appeared anonymously, *Das Turnen und die deutsche Volkserziehung. Ein Entwurf* (Frankfurt: Heinrich Ludwig Brönnner, 1843). Reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* II, 112–144.

had shown that enthusiasm is not enough: before they even get to the battlefield, physically weak youth succumb to disease. An effective army therefore had to consist of a physically fit soldiery, one whose bodies have been strengthened by gymnastics.

Military preparation was, however, only one beneficial consequence of introducing gymnastics into the curriculum. Trendelenburg's main argument in favor of gymnastics is that it is a vital part of self-realization. Following the old dictum *mens sana in corpore sano*, he stresses the unity of the living person, that the development of the mind is dependent on the active development of the body. He deplores how modern culture is so active mentally yet so passive physically. A body neglected is a body that revenges itself on the mind: physical disharmony brings mental disharmony. Though his advocacy of gymnastics was relatively new in German education, Trendelenburg was, as usual, self-consciously following a classical precedent. It was Plato and Aristotle who made gymnastics and music essential parts of education, as important as reading and writing. If the Germans had already learned so much from the Greeks in philosophy and the arts, they also stood much to learn from them in education, and here the lesson was to make gymnastics an integral part of education.

One of Trendelenburg's greatest contributions to philosophy in the nineteenth century came not from his writings, lectures or seminars in the University of Berlin but from his work on the *Prüfungskommission* for the Prussian Ministry of Education. Trendelenburg was the main force behind keeping philosophy on the curricula of Prussian *Gymnasia*. Since 1825 philosophy had been an obligatory subject in *Gymnasia*, but its introduction had proven to be problematic. The discipline was too abstract for young minds; and, given the disagreements among philosophers, it was difficult to find a proper textbook. Such, indeed, were the difficulties in teaching the subject that many called for its abolition. Trendelenburg felt that such a measure would be a disaster. Like all the philosophers, he believed that philosophy is at the very core of education, and that it is the best discipline and stimulus for young minds. To abolish the subject in *Gymnasia* would be to lose a major battle against the corrupt and corrosive utilitarian and materialist ethic, the main threat to German education. But given that philosophy should stay, something had to be found that could serve as an introduction to philosophical study. It was necessary to find a textbook that could teach students the basics and that would not be philosophically partisan. Trendelenburg believed that no part of philosophy was better suited to these roles than logic. He had himself learned logic from König during his days at the Eutiner *Gymnasium*, and he had found it to be an indispensable foundation for his own studies. But that left the question: what form should this logic take? Given his classical leanings, Trendelenburg's answer will come as no surprise. In his view, that logic should be none other than Aristotle's. No one could dispute that Aristotle's logic and terminology had been basic to the discipline, that it was a common heritage of all the philosophical schools. The only problem is that one could not expect a *Gymnasium* student, no matter how fluent his Greek, to read through all the *Organon*, *Prior*, and *Posterior Analytics*. But for this difficulty Trendelenburg had a solution. He put together a short compendium

with Latin commentary containing basic passages from Aristotle's logical works. The compendium was published in 1836 under the title *Elementa logices Aristotelicae*.<sup>21</sup> It proved a great success, becoming quickly adopted in *Gymnasia* throughout Prussia and going through many editions. By this means Trendelenburg achieved two goals in one stroke: he assured that philosophy would remain on the curriculum in Prussia, and that Aristotle's influence would endure.

<sup>21</sup> *Elementa logices Aristotelicae* (Berlin: Bethge, 1836). The book went through nine editions from 1842 to 1892. It was translated into English by R. Broughton as *Outlines of Logic* (Oxford: A.T. Shrimpton & Son, 1881) (second edition 1898), where it was used as part of the curriculum in Oxford. There is a modern German translation by Rainer Beer, *Elemente der Aristotelischen Logik* (Munich: Rowohlt, 1967).

## Controversy Over Kant

### 1. An Infamous Dispute

If Trendelenburg is familiar at all to philosophers today, it is probably because of his famous dispute in the 1860s with Kuno Fischer about Kant's theory of space and time. The dispute is still discussed today among Kant scholars, who remain divided by it. At the very least the controversy raised an important question in Kant scholarship: Namely, whether Kant's a priori forms of space and time must apply solely to appearances or whether they can also apply to things-in-themselves? But it also involved more general philosophical questions: the subjective versus objective status of space and time, the conditions for the validity of mathematics, and the merits of transcendental versus absolute idealism. The dispute was especially important for German philosophy in the 1860s. It was a major catalyst for the neo-Kantian revival, which blossomed in this decade. Because of the broader implications involved in the question of the subjective or objective status of space and time, philosophers became interested in Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic and Trendelenburg's and Fischer's opposing interpretations of it. As a result, there could no longer be any doubt about "*die Aktualität Kants*".<sup>1</sup>

Though it raised substantive philosophical issues, the dispute between Fischer and Trendelenburg eventually degenerated into a personal brawl. By the late 1860s the quarrel had become a notorious spectacle. Here were two of the most eminent philosophers in Germany, professors at two of its most prestigious universities—one in Berlin, the other in Heidelberg—locked in a bitter personal feud over a question of Kant interpretation. The dispute attracted such attention chiefly because of the animosity it aroused between its contestants. They began by discussing Kant interpretation; but they ended by abusing one another. Each cast doubt on the ability of their adversary to discuss exegetical or philosophical questions in an honest and impartial manner. Both quit the field bristling with indignation and nursing wounded vanity. Not surprisingly, the dispute was widely reported in the press and heavily discussed in lectures, reviews, articles and books. Battle lines were drawn, and parties rallied around one contestant or the other. When the dust finally settled, Hans Vaihinger counted some fifty books, brochures and articles devoted to the debate.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is the view of Köhnke, *Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus*, 258.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Vaihinger, *Kommentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, 1922) II, 545–548.



To understand the Trendelenburg–Fischer dispute, it is of the first importance to get beyond the common impression that it concerns only issues of Kant scholarship. These issues are often front and centre, to be sure, but they were important for the participants only because of the larger philosophical problem invested in them. That problem concerned the classic Kantian question: How is knowledge of nature possible? Since knowledge of nature requires mathematics, the problem took a more specific form: How to justify the application of mathematics to experience? Regarding this classical problem, Trendelenburg and Fischer held opposing views. Both accepted the central thesis of Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic that space and time are a priori intuitions; they did so because they could not countenance the empiricist alternative that mathematics is a posteriori, derived from experience. They agreed that the empiricist alternative undermined the universal and necessary validity of mathematics. So the crucial question then became: Under what conditions do a priori intuitions apply to experience? In answering that question Trendelenburg took a firm stand in behalf of a scientific realism, i.e., he held that the principles of mathematics should be applicable to nature itself, to nature as it exists apart from and prior to human consciousness; or, in Kantian terms, that they should be applicable to things-in-themselves rather than just appearances. Fischer, however, stuck to the Kantian position that the validity of physical science requires nothing more than the application of mathematics to appearances. Behind these opposing answers, as we shall soon see, lay an even greater conflict between two forms of idealism: absolute versus transcendental, objective versus subjective. Epistemic issues thus became metaphysical ones.<sup>3</sup> Yet both parties to the dispute assumed that the only adequate idealism would be that which could justify the application of mathematics to experience.

In the middle of the dispute these fundamental issues were often lost sight of, and they were clouded over by questions of Kantian exegesis. The dispute often became very confused, vacillating between different kinds of questions that were rarely distinguished. There were three types of question: 1) What did Kant say? 2) What were the *implications* of his argument? 3) Are his arguments valid? The first question is historical; the second is logical; the third is philosophical. In all fairness it must be said that Trendelenburg was more confused about these issues than Fischer, who was the more faithful Kant scholar. When Fischer would cite texts against him, Trendelenburg

<sup>3</sup> In his dispute with Trendelenburg Fischer consistently represents the standpoint of Kant's transcendental idealism. It is important to add, however, that Fischer's eclectic philosophy, which attempts to combine Kant with Hegel, also involves absolute idealist views similar to Trendelenburg. Thus Fischer too maintained the principle of subject-object identity of Schelling's and Hegel's philosophy, according to which there is one and the same reason in both self and nature. Yet the Kantian dimension of Fischer's thinking, fully apparent in 1852, becomes even more pronounced by 1860. In his 1860 lectures on Kant, Fischer had declared the Transcendental Aesthetic, the cornerstone of transcendental idealism, to be one of Kant's great achievements. See *Kant's Leben und die Grundlagen seiner Lehre*. (Mannheim: Bassermann, 1860), vi, 140. By the time of the dispute with Trendelenburg the Kantian dimension of Fischer's thinking is even more entrenched and delineated, though the picture remains complicated because he never completely abandoned his Hegelian metaphysics either.

would often simply change the question, saying it was not a matter of what Kant said but of the implications of his arguments or whether they were even true.

Armed with this general perspective and these preliminary caveats, let us now enter into the amphitheater of combat and note the main episodes of the debate. On no account will we unravel all the details, least of all those of interest only to Kant scholars. We will pause to consider only those crucial for the general philosophical issues at stake. We will also refrain from dwelling on the personal animosity of the contestants, which now seem, with all the advantages of hindsight, silly.

## 2. Origins and Context

The origins of the dispute go back to the early 1860s.<sup>4</sup> In the second edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen* (1862) Trendelenburg had taken account of all the latest efforts to rehabilitate the Hegelian dialectic since the appearance of his first edition. That debate had already tried Trendelenburg's patience since the Hegelians had not been the most polite opponents. It did not bode well, then, that among those who wanted to revive Hegel was the young Kuno Fischer, then a *Dozent* in Heidelberg.<sup>5</sup> In his 1852 *Logik und Metaphysik* Fischer attempted to revise Hegel's dialectic of being and nothingness.<sup>6</sup> Fischer was a very peculiar Hegelian, a Kantian Hegelian to use an oxymoron, i.e., one who believed that Hegel's system had to be "placed under the critical standpoint or the control of Kant."<sup>7</sup> Convinced that the problems of logic have to be pursued from a strictly transcendental standpoint,<sup>8</sup> Fischer then gave the Hegelian dialectic a decidedly Kantian twist. The dialectic was not about pure concepts or categories, as Hegel imagined it, but the transcendental subject who is the condition for them. According to Fischer's interpretation, the dialectic begins with the subject

<sup>4</sup> In his *Die Philosophie Trendelenburg's* Petersen (158n) traces the origin of the dispute back to the 1850s when Fischer criticized Trendelenburg's interpretation of Spinoza in his *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* (Mannheim: Bassermann, 1854), 568–574. But Fischer's critique of Trendelenburg in this edition of his *Geschichte* is decidedly polite and complimentary and contains nothing that would have turned Trendelenburg against him. Trendelenburg's support for Fischer's habilitation in Berlin in 1856 is also evidence that the tension between them does not derive from this work. Fischer's critique of Trendelenburg is strictly about issues of Spinoza interpretation, which have little direct relevance for the later dispute over Kant. The later editions of Fischer's *Geschichte* are, however, rather polemical. See *Spinozas Leben, Werke und Lehre* (Heidelberg: Winter 1948), now volume IV of the *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, 569–573. But these passages were written after the dispute with Trendelenburg, and so are more its effect than cause.

<sup>5</sup> Fischer was a *Privatdozent* in Heidelberg from 1850 to 1852 when he wrote the first edition of his *Logik und Metaphysik*, which was meant to reply to Trendelenburg's criticisms of Hegel in the first edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen*. Fischer was dismissed from his post in Heidelberg in 1852 for having taught pantheism. In 1855 there was an (unsuccessful) attempt to re-instate him in Berlin, in which Trendelenburg played an active role. In 1856 Fischer became an honorary professor in Jena, where he taught for the next sixteen years. On Fischer's biography, see Reinhold Hülsewiesche, *System und Geschichte: Leben und Werke Kuno Fischers* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1989), 17–46.

<sup>6</sup> Kuno Fischer, *Logik und Metaphysik oder Wissenschaftslehre* (Stuttgart: C.P. Scheitlin's Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1852), 53–57, §§28–30.

<sup>7</sup> Kuno Fischer, *Logik und Metaphysik*, xv.

<sup>8</sup> Kuno Fischer, *Logik und Metaphysik*, xii, xiv–xvi, 55–57.

abstracting from all content of knowledge and reflecting solely on itself. If there is one thing that the subject cannot abstract from, that is itself, because even in attempting to abstract from itself it will have to be doing the abstracting. The subject knows only one thing: that it alone exists, and that it alone is being. Hence we already have the category of being, the first category of Hegel's logic. This very subject also knows, however, that its being amounts to nothingness, because its being is nothing determinate, nothing more than its pure bare subjectivity. And so we get the second category of Hegel's logic: nothingness. Now it is not difficult to get the third. The Fischerian subject is caught in a contradiction: it declares that it is a being that is a non-being. But the being that is not being, a being that both is and is not, what is that but becoming? And so, hey presto!, we have becoming, the third Hegelian category. By these few deft strokes within the depths of the transcendental subject, Fischer believed he had rehabilitated Hegel's opening dialectic. In a pointed remark Fischer conceded that some objections against the beginning of the logic—and here he mentioned Trendelenburg by name—are valid; but he stressed that they held only against the common interpretation.<sup>9</sup> That interpretation had focused on the content of the concepts; but it had crucially ignored the act of thinking behind them. It was only when this act of thinking is taken into account, Fischer contended, that it is possible to restore the true spirit behind Hegel's dialectic.

But Trendelenburg was having nothing of it.<sup>10</sup> Weary of his past battles with Hegelians, he gave the young professor, however fragile, sensitive and large his ego, the same blunt treatment as the other Hegelians. Fischer's reasoning could make no pretension to rigour, Trendelenburg thought. The being involved in thinking is not pure being, being as such, but only the being of active thinking. And to reason from the being of the subject to being as such is a leap from the subject to object, for which there is not the slightest justification. Furthermore, nothing followed from the being of the subject about its non-being, and for the simple reason that being and non-being contradict one another. Trendelenburg declared that all Fischer's dialectical transitions were "bold", where their boldness lay less in their logic than the thinker behind them. The Fischerian subject, somewhat like its Fichtean ancestor, simply declared things, as if it could resolve problems by sheer fiat. "It is bold with such easy tricks to want to conquer all of idealism, the whole worldview." (125)

From such a sharp rebuke Fischer's sensitive ego could not, and did not, easily recover. Hitherto Trendelenburg had a friendly relationship with Fischer, who had once been his student in Berlin, and whom he had strongly supported in his attempt to habilitate in Berlin. Rumors reached him from afar, however, that Fischer had bristled at the harshness of his critique. Fearing that he had gone too far, Trendelenburg wrote Fischer hoping to control the damage.<sup>11</sup> But that gesture was all in vain. The die had been cast.

<sup>9</sup> Kuno Fischer, *Logik und Metaphysik*, 55, §29 Zusatz.

<sup>10</sup> See *Logische Untersuchungen* I, 121–127.

<sup>11</sup> See Köhnke, *Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus*, 261–262. Köhnke cites the text of the letter, which is unpublished and in a Heidelberg archive.

After suffering such a bruising, Fischer believed self-vindication a necessity. And so in the second edition of his *Logik und Metaphysik*, which appeared in 1865,<sup>12</sup> he made a special point of examining Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen*. Section §65 is devoted to a detailed exposition of Trendelenburg's position, section §66 to a detailed critique. It is of the first importance to note that Fischer is concerned here to examine Trendelenburg's philosophy as a whole and not merely to defend or reformulate his dialectic. Questions of Kant scholarship take second place and are only parts of more general issues. What troubled Fischer about Trendelenburg's critique was not simply its brusque manner but its lack of substance. Trendelenburg was perhaps correct to find the holes in his dialectic, Fischer felt, but much more was at stake than the details of his reasoning. Trendelenburg had rode roughshod over his underlying conception: that the problems of logic have to be approached from a transcendental standpoint. Above all, Fischer wanted to keep alive the Kantian critical legacy, the heritage of Kant's and Fichte's idealism, which begins with and never leaves behind the transcendental subject, the first condition of all knowledge. He feared that Trendelenburg's philosophy, in beginning with movement and making that its first principle, was attempting to leap beyond the transcendental standpoint, and in doing so was taking philosophy down the path of dogmatism. Sure enough, in his examination of the *Logische Untersuchungen* Fischer takes Trendelenburg to task for forgetting the subject which is behind movement (168). The "*Grundirrtum*" of Trendelenburg's philosophy is that it fails to see that movement by itself produces nothing. What is important is *who* is doing the moving, the cause of motion, the subject behind it (171–172). Granted, there are places in the *Untersuchungen* where Trendelenburg writes about the activity of thinking, as if thinking were behind the movement; but then he vacillates between treating motion as the condition of thinking and thinking as the condition of motion (172n).

It is in this context that Fischer raises the issue of Kantian scholarship that will later become the chief focus of the dispute. Trendelenburg had argued in chapter VI of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, "Raum und Zeit", that all Kant's proofs for the subjectivity of space and time in the "Transcendental Aesthetic" do not exclude the possibility that they are also valid of things-in-themselves (I, 158–170). He realized that Kant intended to argue that space and time are *only* subjective, and that Kant constantly said they have no validity for things-in-themselves. But the crucial issue for Trendelenburg concerned not Kant's intentions or statements but the implications of his principles, i.e., what was permitted or forbidden by his arguments (I, 160). If we examine closely Kant's arguments, he contended, we see that they do not exclude the *possibility* that the forms of space and time are valid of things-in-themselves; in other words, the subjective origin of these forms does not mean that they must be valid only for how the world appears to us.

<sup>12</sup> The book was revised, retitled and much enlarged from its original 1852 version. It now appeared as *System der Logik und Metaphysik oder Wissenschaftslehre* Zweite umgearbeitete Auflage (Heidelberg: Bassermann, 1865). All references in parentheses henceforth are to this edition.

Trendelenburg later laid out the issue as follows.<sup>13</sup> There are three possibilities regarding the epistemic status of space and time: 1) they are *only* subjective, i.e., forms of intuition that are valid only for how we perceive the world, or the world as it appears to us, and not for things-in-themselves; 2) they are *only* objective, i.e., the structure of things that exist whether or not we perceive them; and 3) they are *both* subjective and objective, i.e., though they are forms of intuition arising from our subjective mental activity, they are also true of the objective structure of things themselves. In the *Logische Untersuchungen* Trendelenburg wanted to defend this third possibility (I, 164, 170). He accepted Kant's arguments in the Transcendental Aesthetic that space and time are a priori forms of intuition, and that they are not abstracted from experience; nevertheless, he still insisted that they can be valid of things-in-themselves, i.e., for nature as it exists apart from and prior to our consciousness of it. For such a possibility he had a ready explanation in his metaphysics of motion. The subjective and objective dimensions of space and time—their existence in both the mind and nature—arise from a common source: movement. The movement that produces these structures in our mind is also one and the same as the movement that produces these structures in nature. Movement is the primal neutral reality, appearing equally and indifferently in consciousness and nature alike.

Why insist on this third possibility? What value does it have? For Trendelenburg the answer is clear: by this means alone can we explain the objective validity of mathematics, its application to experience, and therewith the possibility of natural science. Kant is correct that the validity of mathematics requires that they be a priori forms, and that they not be abstracted from the contingent and particular data of sense. But these a priori forms cannot be valid only of appearances, for how the world appears to our senses, because physics claims that its laws are true of nature as such, for the world as it is apart from and prior to how it appears to us. Realism is for Trendelenburg the intent and *sine qua non* of all science: "It is the tense nerve in all knowing that we want to reach things as they are; we want the thing, not only us."<sup>14</sup> Here Trendelenburg distanced himself from the transcendental idealism of the Kantian-Fichtean tradition—the very tradition that Fischer was bent on preserving. Like many critics of that tradition, Trendelenburg could not accept the subjectivist consequences of Kant's idealism, which trapped the subject inside the circle of its own representations. A Kantian "empirical realism" was for him not an option, because "appearance (*Erscheinung*) is not far removed from illusion" (*Schein*) (I, 160). We can now see the attractions of the third option: it alone would explain the universal and necessary knowledge of mathematics *and* its application to nature in itself. The first possibility ends in subjectivism, i.e., the limitation of knowledge to our own representations; the second cannot

<sup>13</sup> Trendelenburg spelled out these three alternatives a little later, in his *Beiträge* essay rather than his *Untersuchungen*. However they are already clearly implied in the earlier work. For the purposes of a simpler exposition I place them here.

<sup>14</sup> Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen* (1870), I, 163.

explain the universality and necessity of mathematics; only the third avoids subjectivism and secures mathematical knowledge of nature itself.

It was just this third possibility, of course, that Fischer was bent on ruling out. Fischer's commitment to the legacy of transcendental idealism left him no other option. If there could be such a third possibility, Kant's critical standpoint would not be inescapable after all. It would be possible to leap beyond the limits of our own consciousness and into a world of things-in-themselves. It was therefore imperative for Fischer to show that the arguments of the Transcendental Aesthetic—arguments which both he and Trendelenburg accepted—demonstrated not only the subjectivity but also the *exclusive* subjectivity of space and time. Only by engaging in Kantian exegesis, then, could he secure his broader philosophical position.

In the final paragraphs of §66 of the second edition of his *Logik und Metaphysik* Fischer duly mounts two arguments against Trendelenburg's third possibility. First, he makes the exegetical point that Kant's arguments, simply as a matter of their logical structure, show that space and time cannot be properties of things-in-themselves. Fischer points out that Kant often argues like this: that if space and time were objective qualities of things, they would have to be derived from experience; but if that were so, mathematical propositions would have to forfeit their universality and necessity. Second, he makes the philosophical point that Trendelenburg's position does not avoid skepticism but reinvokes it, for it raises the inevitable problem how we know that our representations of things in space correspond to things in objective space (175).<sup>15</sup> The skeptic will answer that we have no means of ever establishing a correspondence between our representations and things-in-themselves, so that all the difficulties return about the possibility of a mathematical knowledge of nature (176–177). What Trendelenburg completely overlooks in his interpretation of Kant, Fischer argues, is Kant's empirical realism. He fails to see that Kant had his own concept of objective knowledge of nature *within* the limits of transcendental idealism. Since empirical realism means that our representations conform to universal and necessary norms, there is no danger of a complete subjectivism, of our knowledge becoming private or arbitrary. What Trendelenburg demands when he insists on a stronger form of realism—the correspondence of knowledge with things-in-themselves—is what Kant would call transcendental realism, which is the very antithesis of transcendental idealism (178).

We are now finally in a position to see the broader issues dividing Fischer and Trendelenburg. On one level all that was at stake was a question of Kantian exegesis: did Kant's arguments permit or forbid the third possibility? Fischer staunchly

<sup>15</sup> Köhnke, in his illuminating account of the controversy, claims that Fischer did not go into the problem how there could be correspondence between the forms of sensibility and reality. See *Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus*, 268. Here he forgets to consider Fischer's important argument at the close of section §66. Fischer was just as concerned with the problem of knowledge as Trendelenburg but believed that it could be solved within the resources of transcendental idealism.

denied, and Trendelenburg stoutly affirmed, that possibility. That was the core of the dispute, at least on its simplest level. But at stake behind that third possibility was the bigger question of the adequacy of transcendental idealism itself. The broader question can be formulated as follows: What better explains the possibility of mathematical knowledge of nature, transcendental or absolute idealism? Fischer's transcendental idealism states that the subject is the first condition of all knowledge, that all knowledge is limited to appearances, and that empirical realism is sufficient to account for the possibility of mathematical knowledge of nature. Trendelenburg's absolute idealism claims that there is a single ideal structure equally instantiated in the subjective and objective realm, that empirical realism is insufficient to account for the mathematical knowledge of nature, and that it is instead necessary to assume something like transcendental realism, i.e., the doctrine that our knowledge is about nature in itself. In assuming that there is a single activity as the source of both the subjective and objective, Trendelenburg had returned to the old line of reasoning once championed by Schelling and Hegel. Fischer, like Fichte before him, rejected that absolute idealism because, in postulating knowledge of nature in itself, it transcends the limits of knowledge, and so lapses into "dogmatism". The dispute between Fischer and Trendelenburg was therefore more than a bit *déjà vu*. It was a repeat of the old battle between Fichte's "subjective idealism" and Schelling's "objective or absolute idealism" which took place in the early 1800s.<sup>16</sup>

That the key issue involved a choice between absolute and transcendental idealism was often obscured in the thicket of Kantian exegesis. Nevertheless, it was stated clearly by Trendelenburg later in the dispute. In his 1869 *Kuno Fischer und sein Kant* he wrote that the question of the third possibility is not only of historical but philosophical importance.<sup>17</sup> If Kant's arguments prove exclusive subjectivity, then transcendental idealism is true; but if they do not, the possibility is open "to show the ideal in the real". "To show the ideal in the real"—that was the absolute idealist's catch phrase for demonstrating how nature, which exists independent of consciousness, manifests the intelligible or intellectual form of things. In other words, Trendelenburg saw the third possibility as opening the door for his own version of absolute idealism, according to which the subjective and objective manifest one and the same intelligible activity. Schelling, in his battle with Fichte in the early 1800s, had made a similar argument in behalf of his own absolute idealism.

### 3. The Dispute Thickens

Fischer's critical examination of the *Logische Untersuchungen* must have been sheer provocation for Trendelenburg, who could not easily have ignored its weighty challenges. Sure enough, a hefty reply duly appeared. In April 1867, a year and half after

<sup>16</sup> On that dispute, see my *German Idealism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 491–505.

<sup>17</sup> Trendelenburg, *Kuno Fischer und sein Kant: Eine Entgegnung* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1869), 2–3.



the second edition of Fischer's *Logik und Metaphysik*, Trendelenburg published a lengthy article in the third volume of his *Historische Beiträge zur Philosophie*, "Ueber eine Lücke in Kants Beweis von der ausschliessende Subjektivität des Raums und der Zeit",<sup>18</sup> which revisited all the outstanding issues in his debate with Fischer. Trendelenburg's opening account of the dispute greatly clarifies his own position and some of the broader questions. He makes it plain that he accepts Kant's theory in the Transcendental Aesthetic that space and time are subjective, a priori forms of sensible intuition, and that the reason he accepts it is because it alone guarantees the universality and necessity of mathematical truth (217). The alternative empiricist view, that space and time are objective and derived from experience, would make them inductive generalizations, and so forfeit that universality and necessity. Where Kant goes astray, Trendelenburg argues, is in concluding that the a priori forms of space and time are *only* subjective. If this is the case, these forms apply only to appearances and we have no guarantee that they hold for nature itself. Since these appearances are only representations within us, the Kantian limitation of knowledge to appearances brings us close to, as he now put it, "skepticism" (217). Trendelenburg stated clearly what he found most problematic about Kant's arguments: that though fruitful for explaining mathematical truth, they cannot account for the *application* of mathematics to nature. "If the possibility of pure mathematics was explained by Kant, applied mathematics became inexplicable for him" (217). So, to save physics, the possibility of mathematical knowledge of nature, Trendelenburg thinks that we must have *both* the a priori subjective status of space and application to reality in itself. This is his third possibility—the only possibility—and to secure it he again appeals to his theory in the *Logische Untersuchungen* that space and time derive from a single activity in both subject and object (218–222). The spatial figures we construct a priori in our minds correspond with the spatial figures in nature because they are ultimately the result of one and the same productive activity (218, 221, 222).

Another virtue of the *Beiträge* essay is that Trendelenburg explained more clearly why he believed Kant's arguments in the Transcendental Aesthetic do not exclude his third possibility. *Prima facie* his interpretation seemed utterly implausible. For Kant seemed not only to conceive this third possibility but to argue expressly against it. If the forms of space and time were true of things-in-themselves, Kant reasoned in the Transcendental Aesthetic, they would have to derive from these things, so that they would have an empirical origin, thus forfeiting their universality and necessity. Indeed, had not Kant made it a principle that we cannot attribute properties to things prior to having some experience of them?<sup>19</sup> Fischer was quick to point out such passages, and it was largely on these grounds that he rejected Trendelenburg's interpretation. In response to Fischer, Trendelenburg admits that Kant sometimes does reason in this way; but he insists that he need not do so. That Kant made this argument is simply

<sup>18</sup> *Historische Beiträge zur Philosophie* (Berlin: Bethge, 1867), III, 215–276. All references are to this edition.

<sup>19</sup> KrV B 49.



a relic of empiricism in his own thinking (229–230). It is still logically possible for representations to be a priori, originating in the mind alone, and for them to be applicable to things themselves (246). This is indeed just what happens if there is a single activity behind the creation of these forms in both mind and nature, which is precisely the contention of the *Logische Untersuchungen*.

Trendelenburg's rejection of Kant's reasoning shows the extent to which he was more interested in reconstructing than interpreting Kant. He had already made it very clear in the *Logische Untersuchungen* that the issue at stake was systematic or logical rather than historical or philological. What mattered was not what Kant explicitly said but what his arguments in the Transcendental Aesthetic had proven. This position is explicitly reaffirmed in the *Beiträge* (217). The crucial question, Trendelenburg insisted, is only whether Kant has adequately demonstrated that space and time are only subjective. That question he had now answered in the negative, which was a purely philosophical point.

This, it would seem, should have been the end of the matter. Unfortunately, however, Trendelenburg went on to muddy the waters. Having clearly and firmly placed the *Streitfrage* outside the thorny thickets of philology and history, he immediately threw it right back into them. For he went on to insist that Kant, as a matter of historical fact, had never even considered, let alone rejected, the third possibility, and he even challenged Fischer to find at least one passage where Kant had done so (226–227). The whole dispute would be resolved, he claimed, if such a passage could be found (227). Now the hunt was on for the decisive and telling text—a philological *experimentis crucis*—that would end the dispute, as if it were only an historical matter after all. Given Trendelenburg's earlier stance, however, it should not have mattered at all whether Kant as a matter of fact ever considered the third possibility; all that was important was whether his arguments would allow it. After all, Kant could have been mistaken about the logical powers of his own arguments.

To compound the confusion, Trendelenburg contradicted himself in trying to define his relation to Kant. Was his system the completion or refutation of Kant's? Fischer had pointed out this ambiguity, noting that his opponent "wanted to both refute and complete the Transcendental Aesthetic."<sup>20</sup> Indignant, Trendelenburg insisted that he never said anything about completing Kant's philosophy, and he challenged Fischer to provide an appropriate citation (224). It would be absurd, he argued, for him to try to complete Kant's system, for there is a straightforward incompatibility between it and his own system: no one can hold that space and time are only subjective *and* that they are both subjective and objective. Yet, it must be said, Trendelenburg's reply was somewhat disingenuous. No, he had never said *expressis verbis* that he wanted to complete Kant. But he had said explicitly in the *Untersuchungen* that his position would "preserve the truth of the Kantian view and fill in its gaps."<sup>21</sup> This impression is

<sup>20</sup> Fischer, *System der Logik und Metaphysik*, 174.

<sup>21</sup> *Logische Untersuchungen*, I, 166, second edition. This passage reappears in the third edition, I, 168.

only strengthened at the end of the *Beiträge* article when Trendelenburg goes to great lengths to show how Kant anticipated his own metaphysics of motion (273). Whatever Trendelenburg had meant by preserving and filling in the gaps of Kant's system, his statement had the unfortunate effect of keeping the dispute mired in questions of Kantian exegesis. For it made it seem as if Trendelenburg claimed to represent "the spirit" of the Kantian philosophy.

Given Trendelenburg's confusion about the logical or historical status of the issues at stake, it comes as a great irony that he charges Fischer for failing to respect historical scholarship. He praised Fischer for his creative interpretations of philosophers, for how he found the single guiding idea behind a philosopher and then showed how his thinking formed a coherent whole (258–259). But, if he admires Fischer's "ingenuity", he also thinks it runs the risk of being too speculative, because his interpretations are not sufficiently tied down to the texts. In the end of the day, Trendelenburg preaches, we have to respect that painstaking scholarship which pieces together an interpretation by scrutinizing the details of a text. This was Trendelenburg the historian speaking, the Aristotle scholar who had labored for years over the correct interpretation of passages in *De Anima*. Now he was insisting, perfectly correctly, that the same standards applied to Kant scholarship. Yet there was something cruelly perverse in Trendelenburg's insinuation that Fischer was not complying with these standards. For it was Fischer who was the more careful in citing line and verse from Kant's texts, only for Trendelenburg to declare them irrelevant on the grounds that the real issue was purely logical or philosophical.

For anyone interested in exploring the philosophical issues behind the dispute, Trendelenburg's *Beiträge* article proves a deep disappointment. For Trendelenburg not only directs the discussion toward history: he also gives Fischer's philosophical objections short shrift. He addresses them only briefly at the end of the article and then dismisses them as essentially "dialectical" (261). Fischer's arguments were indeed polemical; but they were also motivated by principles antithetical to Trendelenburg's whole system. Rather than taking issue with these principles, Trendelenburg focuses on only the polemical arguments based upon them. To Fischer's argument that the principle of motion presupposes a subject who moves it, Trendelenburg replied that there is indeed such a subject, but that it does not exist apart from and prior to its activities but exists only in and through them (267). And to Fischer's challenge how he could know his first principle of motion to be the first principle, Trendelenburg responded that he advanced his principle only as an hypothesis and accepted it only if its consequences agreed with experience (260). When it came to Fischer's argument that Trendelenburg could not guarantee that subjective space corresponds with objective, Trendelenburg simply replied, again disingenuously,<sup>22</sup> that he never claimed that

<sup>22</sup> See *Beiträge* 218, 243, where Trendelenburg says that "the conscious movement of thinking" gives insight into "blind nature" by reproducing it.

subjective space is an “image” or “copy” of objective space (268). But, whether that is true or not, it scarcely answered the substance of Fischer’s objection.

#### 4. The Curtain Falls, Finally

Unfortunately, Trendelenburg’s *Beiträge* essay only enflamed the dispute. Fischer took the opportunity to reply to Trendelenburg’s essay in the second edition of his Kant book, *Kants Vernunftkritik und deren Entstehung*, which appeared in early 1869.<sup>23</sup> In the preface Fischer said that he had no wish to engage in polemics in a book intended to be entirely scholarly; but he felt that he had no choice in the case of Trendelenburg, who would regard his silence as a sign of submission and defeat. Fischer then went on to list all the points in which he disagreed with Trendelenburg. The list really adds nothing more to the points already covered in the dispute, except that Fischer does bring out more clearly than before the importance of Kant’s empirical realism, which he thinks Trendelenburg has failed to appreciate. The rest of Fischer’s dispute with Trendelenburg goes on in the many footnotes added to the second edition, many of which are several pages long.<sup>24</sup> These notes are mainly about points of detail in the exegesis of Kantian texts, and they add little, if anything, to the understanding of the general issues dividing the disputants. Now, though, the dispute became more personal than before. Fischer complained that Trendelenburg’s praise of his “genial” interpretations was really a kind of reverse “*Antoniusrede*”, i.e., a speech made not to praise but bury him.<sup>25</sup> Trendelenburg had portrayed him as “first an honorable man, then as a scoundrel who would break the neck of truth.” It was also a false dilemma, Fischer argued, to claim that his interpretations were at the expense of the texts; it is necessary to grasp a philosopher as a whole, and any such interpretation can also be confirmed by texts. Fischer then charged that Trendelenburg was playing tricks on him by demanding the citation of texts when they were already cited or when they were not necessary because they were about such plain matters. Finally, in a few damning lines, Fischer declared his doubts that Trendelenburg even wanted to understand him (xv).

The dispute should well have ended here. Fischer’s preface and footnotes laid out his interpretation of Kant with sufficient clarity, and there was really nothing more to add to them, not least because they only repeated what had already been said. It was only reasonable to hope for some investigation into the main philosophical issues dividing the disputants. But that hope had long been dashed after Trendelenburg’s *Beiträge* essay, which had glossed over the philosophical issues and which had pushed the dispute into philological territory. Trendelenburg, however, would not let Fischer have the last word. He felt that Fischer, in declaring that he did not want to understand him,

<sup>23</sup> This is Volume III of Fischer’s *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* (Heidelberg: Bassermann, 1869).

<sup>24</sup> The most important passages are Fischer’s *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, Volume III, 263–265, 315–316, 322–325, 328–330, 335–336, 338–340, 547–550.

<sup>25</sup> Fischer was referring, of course, to Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, Act III, scene II, lines 79–112.

had crossed the line and impugned his integrity: it was as if he were not interested in truth at all. So in 1869 he published his polemical tract *Kuno Fischer und sein Kant: eine Entgegnung*, which is exclusively devoted to a refutation of Fischer's interpretation of Kant.<sup>26</sup> The motto of the tract, *veritas odium parit* [truth breeds hate], is fitting, bearing witness to the animosity that inspired it and that it in turn inspired.

Trendelenburg's tract adds little or nothing to the dispute. It does not clarify the deeper philosophical issues behind it, and it gets bogged down in pointless details of Kantian exegesis. It is even more unfortunate that Trendelenburg says so little about his own doctrines in the *Logische Untersuchungen* and how they are meant to solve the crucial question of the possibility of mathematical knowledge of nature. The animosity that inspired the tract even stoops to the level of the petty: Trendelenburg retracts his sole generous gesture to Fischer, his statement that Fischer's interpretations were "genial".

But if Trendelenburg was silly enough to continue the dispute, at least he was also decent enough to end it. At the close of *Kuno Fischer und sein Kant* he exposed his wounded feelings regarding Fischer's statement that he did not want to understand him. If Fischer thought that, then there was no point in arguing anymore. And so Trendelenburg forswore any further dispute with his opponent. And with that self-righteous gesture the dispute was finally over. At least for Trendelenburg.

But not for Fischer. Not a man to let someone else have the last word, Fischer replied to Trendelenburg's pamphlet with one of his own, his 1870 *Anti-Trendelenburg: eine Duplik*.<sup>27</sup> This tract was no improvement on Trendelenburg's, either in content or in tone. Fischer spends an extraordinary amount of space—and exhausts his reader's patience—with a pedantic treatment of Kant's theory of concepts which has little importance for the general issues. When he finally does come to the central issue dividing him from Trendelenburg—the question of the third possibility—he simply repeats what he has already said. He cites Kant at length to the effect that the a priori status of space and time are necessary conditions of mathematical truth—a point that Trendelenburg never really questioned. The rest of the pamphlet consists in tireless and tiresome pedantic self-vindication.

After *Anti-Trendelenburg* the dispute was finally over for Fischer too. He and Trendelenburg had now had more than enough of one another. The dispute was then continued by a host of younger scholars who sided with either one or the other of the older professors.<sup>28</sup> The reverberations continue to this day. Though the question of

<sup>26</sup> Trendelenburg, *Kuno Fischer und sein Kant: Eine Entgegnung* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1869), 2–3.

<sup>27</sup> *Anti-Trendelenburg: eine Duplik* (Jena: Hermann Dabis, 1870). The second edition, which appeared in the same year with the same publisher, bears the new title *Anti-Trendelenburg: Eine Entgegnung*. It is also slightly shorter.

<sup>28</sup> For a helpful summary of the later episodes of the dispute, see Christopher Adair-Totef, "The Neo-Kantian *Raum* Controversy", *The British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 2 (1994), 131–148, esp. 139–148.

transcendental versus absolute idealism has been long forgotten, the basic question of “the neglected alternative” still remains.<sup>29</sup>

What should be our final assessment of this dispute? In retrospect it seems like a lost opportunity, a failure to discuss the deeper philosophical issues at stake. Much more could have been said about the relative merits of transcendental versus absolute idealism, much more about the differing solutions to the problem of the application of mathematics. It is not enough to say that the dispute got bogged down in the details of Kant scholarship. That is true; but it is not as if much had been said by either Fischer or Trendelenburg to illuminate Kant’s texts. Most of the dispute was an exercise in pointless pedantry. The reason for this, of course, lay in the personal animosity between Fischer and Trendelenburg, which made it impossible for them to discuss any of the issues dividing them—whether historical or philosophical—in an impartial and illuminating way. Trendelenburg’s and Fischer’s arguments ultimately took the form of bickering. Like a badly married couple, they spat for the sake of spitting. The more they quarreled, the more spiteful they became; and the more spiteful they became, the more they quarreled. No wonder the controversy attracted such attention. “*Schadenfreude ist die reinste Freude*”, as the old German adage goes, and here it was to be had in abundance by watching two vain academics wound one another and then moan about it. Of all the episodes in Trendelenburg’s illustrious intellectual career, this is the only one that does him little credit. For once, and perhaps only once, Trendelenburg had diminished himself.

<sup>29</sup> For some more recent treatments of this question, see Henry Allison, “The Non-Spatiality of Things-in-Themselves for Kant”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 14 (1976), 313–321; Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 354–369; and Graham Bird, “The Neglected Alternative: Trendelenburg, Fischer and Kant”, in *A Companion to Kant* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 486–499.

# Epilogue

## Coda and Critique

Even in his late sixties Trendelenburg was still working hard at the university. He continued to give lectures and to preside over the Academy of Sciences. Only his duties for the Examination Board of the Ministry of Education, which he had served for more than thirty years, had ceased after his resignation in 1865. Trendelenburg often regretted that his duties had taken him away from his writing. He wanted to complete his ethics but doubted that his duties “in the years of declining vitality” would give him the necessary leisure.

In early 1870 the workload finally exacted its heavy price: Trendelenburg suffered a mild stroke. Rumor had it that reading Fischer’s *Anti-Trendelenburg* was the cause; but Trendelenburg had only heard about it after his recovery, and then decided it was the better part of wisdom never to read it.<sup>1</sup> After a brief convalescence in the Swiss countryside, he recovered enough to resume his duties and began lecturing again in the Winter Semester 1870/1871. But the resumption of his work, and the continuing effects of the stroke, weakened him; his health began to decline gradually but steadily. On January 24, 1872, he died quietly in his sleep.

Thus passed away one of the last great representatives of classical German philosophy, the grand idealist tradition of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. For all his criticisms of that tradition, Trendelenburg had contributed mightily to its preservation. While he had rejected its a priori methodology and its dialectical method, he still revived some of its most inspiring themes: the organic concept of nature, the unity of the mental and physical, the concept of the absolute, the ultimate intelligibility of things. Like all the great idealists, Trendelenburg never relented in the belief that philosophy should provide a worldview, an interpretation of reality as a whole and guidance for the practical conduct of life. Although philosophy had to learn from the sciences, it still had its own distinctive mission and goals, so that it was never in danger of obsolescence by them. It was the unique mission of philosophy to show the highest truths of nature and the basic values of humanity.

After his death Trendelenburg’s fame rapidly declined, so much so that Dilthey had to remind his students of the very existence of the man who had once meant so much to him. Trendelenburg’s metaphysics had few disciples among his students. The metaphysics of motion and the organic concept of nature found little resonance among the young. Dilthey, Brentano, and Cohen appropriated specific themes from

<sup>1</sup> Bratuscheck, *Trendelenburg*, 217.

his philosophy; but they abandoned the system as a whole. Why was this? Why was Trendelenburg so quickly forgotten? The reasons are not hard to surmise. On a fundamental level Trendelenburg had failed by his own standards. He wanted to revive the organic worldview of the ancients by putting it on a modern foundation. That foundation would be in part the methods of the new empirical sciences, in part the standards of Kantian criticism. Yet neither the new sciences nor Kantian criticism provided the foundation Trendelenburg required; indeed, they seemed to undermine rather than support his metaphysics. As the century grew old, the advances in biology seemed to overthrow the teleological conception of nature. Although in the 1840s Trendelenburg could still maintain that his philosophy was on the cutting edge of biology, by the 1860s this claim seemed less plausible. Schwann's cell theory, Helmholtz's principle of the conservation of energy, and Darwin's theory of evolution, seemed to vindicate mechanistic paradigms and to eliminate the need for holistic and teleological explanations. Trendelenburg's metaphysics also did not withstand the tribunal of Kantian criticism, because there seemed to be no justification for its realism. The evidence from the physiological experiments of Müller and Helmholtz seemed to vindicate Kant after all: that the world we know is the construction of our own perceptual and conceptual apparatus. So Trendelenburg's "third possibility" remained just that—a mere possibility. It was largely because of his "uncritical realism" that Trendelenburg remained outside the growing neo-Kantian movement of the late nineteenth century. It was indeed no accident that the young Hermann Cohen would reject Trendelenburg's position in the dispute with Fischer and call for a closer adherence to Kant's critical idealism.<sup>2</sup>

Trendelenburg's ethical and political thought also did not survive long after his death. The grand system outlined in *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik* seemed to be a perfect statement of the moderate liberal position in mid-century. But that moderate liberalism—its defense of the monarchy, of a bicameral legislature, of a limited franchise—seemed, at least to more progressive forces, the relic of an older more conservative age. The humanist ethic that Trendelenburg had defended against Kant also seemed vulnerable against the historicist currents of the century. For what is this common human nature, these characteristic human capacities, that somehow remain the same above the flux of history? If human beings are molded according to society and state, as Trendelenburg insisted, then how do they remain the same when societies and states change constantly? It was left to a later generation, especially Windelband, Rickert, Dilthey and Simmel, to confront the relativism inherent in historicism.

One of the greatest weaknesses of Trendelenburg's thought—and one of the chief reasons for its rapid obsolescence—is the absence of a philosophy of history. Trendelenburg lived in the midst of the great historical age—Ranke, Boeckh and Droysen had been his colleagues in Berlin—yet he had paid it insufficient homage. His

<sup>2</sup> On this development, see Poma, *Hermann Cohen*, 13–20; and Köhnke, *Neukantianismus*, 269–272.

own genetic method seemed to be entirely historical; yet Trendelenburg never applied it to his epistemology, ethics and politics, a task that would later fall to Dilthey. He had insisted that the moral and political philosopher should find reason in history; yet he never followed that precept, because he failed to show how, where or why reason is in history. The lack of a philosophy of history appears especially problematic when we consider Trendelenburg's teleological conception of the world. He had insisted in classical Platonic fashion that the world is governed according to the form of the good, which means that there must be some purpose in nature and history. But what is this good? And what evidence is there that history conforms to it? Trendelenburg gives us no answer. Here Hegel, for all his speculative excess, is more satisfying; he tells us exactly what is the purpose of history (the self-consciousness of freedom). Trendelenburg offers us nothing comparable, and for the simple reason that his own more empirical method would not allow it. Following a strict empirical method—limiting oneself to the evidence and making only tentative hypotheses—does not warrant grand metaphysical conclusions about the purpose of history. Trendelenburg wanted an historical teleology, a faith in providence, even though he had espoused a method that could scarcely justify it. In the end, then, Trendelenburg leaves us only with a vague belief in purpose in history—the liberal faith in progress—for which he cannot supply sufficient evidence. Here again he had failed by his own standards.

Yet, for all his flaws, Trendelenburg's contribution was still a great one. He had kept alive a tradition of thought going back to antiquity, a tradition that was in serious danger of being swept away prematurely by the positivist and materialist currents of his age. His grand ambition to restore the past for a modern age was both his greatest weakness and greatest strength: his greatest weakness, because he seemed so quickly outdated; but his greatest strength, because he stood for classical values that never age. Surely, the history of philosophy needs its revivers and preservers as much as its critics and destroyers. And, if only in this limited but important sense, Trendelenburg too deserves his place in the history of philosophy.



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PART II

Lotze

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# The Relevance of Lotze

## Place in History and Influence

When he first arrived in the U.S. as an *émigré* in 1934, Herbert Marcuse, later the philosopher king of the Hippie generation, was astounded by a request of his American hosts at Columbia University. They had asked him to give a public lecture on Lotze! The Americans seemed to have no idea where German philosophy had been in the last fifty years. Marcuse's astonishment dimmed somewhat when he found that the teachers of his Columbia hosts had studied under Lotze in Göttingen.<sup>1</sup> Still, the American request was amazing. After all, who cared about Lotze anymore in Germany?

With the benefit of hindsight, we can excuse Marcuse's surprise as well as the request of his American colleagues. Lotze had died in 1881, and memory of him had quickly faded in Germany. He was an old remnant of the idealist tradition, which had been rapidly smothered by a crush of later developments—by neo-Kantianism, existentialism, phenomenology, Marxism, positivism and critical theory. In the U.S. and England, however, Lotze had been a vital force since the 1870s, and his fame had only grown in the following decades.<sup>2</sup> There he had virtually acquired the stature of Kant and Hegel. Lotze was a seminal influence on Bosanquet, Bradley, Green, Ward, Royce, F.C.S. Schiller, and James; Moore, Russell, Broad, and Dewey, though more critical of him, had also formed their views by discussing him. Such, indeed, was Lotze's influence on Anglo-American philosophy that the decades from 1880 to 1920 have been called "the Lotzean period."<sup>3</sup>

We can well understand, then, why Marcuse's hosts wanted to hear about Lotze. But now that they too have disappeared into the mists of history, we might well ask: Why should *we* bother with Lotze? After all, the concerns that drove our ancestors to study Lotze are no longer our own today. Some of them studied Lotze in the hope that they would find support for Christian theism; others, especially in Oxford, did so to

<sup>1</sup> See Herbert Marcuse, *Mein zwanzigstes Jahrhundert. Auf dem Wege zu einer Autobiographie* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1975), 301.

<sup>2</sup> On Lotze's influence on the Anglo-American world, see Philippe Devaux, *Lotze et son influence sur la philosophie anglo-saxonne* (Brussels: Lamertin, 1932); John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 48–51; and Paul Kuntz, "Rudolf Hermann Lotze, Philosopher and Critic", which is the introduction to his edition of George Santayana's *Lotze's System of Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), 48–68.

<sup>3</sup> This is the judgment of Kuntz, "Rudolph Hermann Lotze", note 2, 49.

bolster absolute idealism. No one today would turn to Lotze for these reasons. Even by the 1920s, Lotze began to seem dated, a staid and stuffy apologist for the moral and religious beliefs of the Victorian age.

Our attitude toward Lotze nowadays is more like that of Marcuse than his American contemporaries. It is a telling sign of his oblivion that he is rapidly disappearing in English reference works.<sup>4</sup> Once a staple of histories of philosophy, he is now fortunate to receive even a passing mention. Only among Frege scholars has Lotze received some recognition.<sup>5</sup>

Such neglect is a pity. For to ignore Lotze is also to forget about our own philosophical past, the origins of our own interests and problems. Even if we are not Christian theists or absolute idealists, we still have strong reasons to go back to Lotze. The source of his abiding relevance comes from his preoccupation with a single fundamental problem, one that still concerns us today. Namely, the limits of naturalism. Lotze was among the first generation of philosophers in Germany who had to confront the advent of a new radical naturalism, the likes of which Spinoza could only dream. This naturalism grew out of the birth of the new empirical sciences in the early nineteenth century. The 1830s and 1840s, the decades when Lotze came of age, saw the rise of modern biology, physiology and psychology. These new sciences made life and the mind seem a normal part of nature, as determined and regulated by mechanical and chemical laws as matter itself. There seemed to be no limits whatsoever to naturalism, which reached its culmination in the materialism of the 1850s. But the triumph of naturalism seemed to come at a terrible price. For the more the new sciences advanced, the less room there seemed to be for *value* in the universe, i.e., for meaning, purpose, freedom, responsibility and beauty. Lotze's philosophy grew out of the attempt to address this issue, to find some place for value in a naturalistic world. No one understood better than Lotze both sides of the question. Trained in medicine,

<sup>4</sup> There is no entry for Lotze in *A Companion to the Philosophers*, ed. Robert Arrington (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), a work otherwise notable for its broad historical and cultural perspectives. There is also no entry in *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, ed. S. Critchley and W. Schroeder (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), or in *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). *Mikrokosmos*, one of the most influential works of the nineteenth century, does not appear in *The Classics of Western Philosophy*, ed. Jorge Garcia et al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003). The eight volume *The History of Continental Philosophy*, ed. Alan D. Schrift, which claims to be "the first comprehensive history of continental philosophy in the English language", never mentions Lotze in its volume devoted to nineteenth century philosophers. Significantly, the first edition of *Masterpiece of World Philosophy in Summary Form*, ed. Frank MacGill (New York: Harper, 1961) contained a summary of *Mikrokosmos*, 638–643; but a later version of the same book, published in 1990, found it advisable to drop such historical baggage.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Hans Sluga, *Frege* (London: Routledge, 1980), 52–58, 117–121, and his "Frege: the early years", in *Philosophy in History*, eds. Richard Rorty, J.B. Schneewind and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 329–356. See also Gottfried Gabriel, "Frege, Lotze, and the Continental Route of Early Analytic Philosophy", in *From Frege to Wittgenstein*, ed. Erich Reck (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 39–51. Lotze's influence on Frege has been a subject of some controversy among Frege scholars. For a careful discussion of some of these issues, see Gabriel's "Lotze und die Entstehung der modernen Logik bei Frege", which is the introduction to his new edition of Book I of Lotze's *Logik* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1989), xi–xxxv.

he was in the forefront of research in physiology and psychology, and he was known as a stalwart champion of mechanism and atomism. Yet Lotze was also raised in the romantic and idealist traditions, so that he had a deep appreciation for the importance of value in our conception of the world. Thus the struggle between science and value became for Lotze an inner personal conflict.

But it is not only Lotze's problem that is so contemporary; it is also his solution to it. In his attempt to limit naturalism and to find a place for value in the world, Lotze developed a set of highly influential concepts and distinctions: between validity and existence, between normativity and nature, between interpretation and understanding, between truth and history, between act and content.<sup>6</sup> Though he did not invent these distinctions, in his battle against naturalism he gave them a strategic importance, and a specific meaning, that proved highly influential. His distinctions were taken up by the next generation, which then refined and elaborated them in many different ways. Though there was never a Lotzean school in Germany, Lotze proved to be a seminal influence on some very seminal thinkers: Brentano, Dilthey, Windelband, Rickert, Lask, Cohen, Husserl and Frege. All attempts to trace the sources of these distinctions, ultimately and inevitably, come back to him. He was indeed the grandfather of the concept of normativity, which has become such a mantra in contemporary philosophy.<sup>7</sup>

Of all Lotze's distinctions one proved especially seductive for the younger generation. Its formulation was like the discovery of a new intellectual universe, one whose full extent and boundaries it would be the task of the next generation to explore and map. In the third book of his 1874 *Logik* Lotze made a simple but seminal distinction between the realms of validity and existence, truth and actuality.<sup>8</sup> The relations between contents of representations are valid or true, he noted, even if these contents refer to nothing existing, and even if no one ever thought of them. This point applies especially well to mathematical truths (viz., "The relation of the circumference of a circle to its diameter is  $\pi:1$ "), but Lotze extended it to all truths about content, even

<sup>6</sup> The importance of these distinctions, and Lotze's role in their development, was widely recognized in the early twentieth century. Emil Lask wrote in 1911: "*Lotzes Herausarbeitung der Geltungssphäre hat der philosophischen Forschung der Gegenwart den Weg vorgezeichnet.*" See his *Logik der Philosophie und die Kategorienlehre*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1923), II, 15. Wilhelm Windelband, who had been a student of Lotze, paid full tribute to him as "the greatest thinker" of the post-idealist age. See his article "Die philosophischen Richtungen der Gegenwart", in *Grosse Denker*, ed. Ernst von Aster (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1911), II, 376. See also the tributes to Lotze in Erich Jaensch, "Zum Gedächtnis von Alois Riehl", *Kant-Studien* 30 (1925), i–xxxvi, xix–xx; "Dr. Staffell", "Rudolf Hermann Lotze", *Preussische Jahrbücher*, December 1918, 328–336; Bruno Bauch, *Wahrheit, Wert und Wirklichkeit* (Leipzig: Meiner, 1923), 3, 36; Arthur Liebert, *Das Problem der Geltung*, Zweite Auflage (Leipzig: Meiner, 1920), 4, 173–179, 204–208; and Fritz Bamberger, *Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des Wertproblems in der Philosophie des 19. Jahrhunderts. I. Lotze* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1924), 40–91.

<sup>7</sup> The source of that concept lies in neo-Kantianism, especially in Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert, both of whom were students of Lotze. On the neo-Kantian origins of that concept, see my "Normativity in Neo-Kantianism: Its Rise and Fall", *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17 (2009), 9–27.

<sup>8</sup> Hermann Lotze, *System der Philosophie: Erster Theil: Drei Bücher der Logik* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1874), I, 465–497. See especially Book III, chapters 2–4.

empirical ones (viz., “Red is different from black”). These propositions are true, he observed, on whatever occasion we think of them, and indeed even if no one ever thinks of them. They do not refer to anything that exists; and if they themselves exist at all, it is only when someone happens to think of them, though their coming into and out of existence on the occasions of our thinking about them never alters their truth. There is a realm of objective truth, then, independent of the existence of the external world, so that skepticism about that world proves to be an irrelevance. Lotze then went on to argue that this was the point that Plato had attempted to make with his world of forms. Plato did not really think that these forms have an existence of their own, and he was far from hypostasizing them; his only point was that their validity is independent of the changing realm of existence. It was this Platonic realm of validity—“the most wonderful fact in the world”, as Lotze called it—that proved such an intoxicating discovery for the new generation. This was the fount from which the young Brentano, Cohen, Husserl, Windelband, Rickert, Lask and Frege would mightily drink. A new and more sophisticated Platonism had been born. Only the young Martin Heidegger refused to join the party.<sup>9</sup>

Whatever one makes of this discovery, it should be clear that the time is ripe for a re-examination of Lotze. To reappraise him, however, we need to get beyond the horizons of “the Lotzean age”. The first generation of Lotze’s students in England, the U.S. and Germany had a very narrow perspective on him. They focused almost exclusively on Lotze’s mature and posthumous works, the later editions of his *Logik* (1880 and 1912) and the second edition of his *Metaphysik* (1884), ignoring nearly completely his many earlier works, though these hold the key to his authorship. Their interest in Lotze was also very partisan, a reflection of their values more than his. Lotze was no defender of Christian theism, still less a champion of absolute idealism, whether in its Oxfordian or Hegelian variety. His aim was more to provide a *synthesis* of theism and idealism, one which preserved their strengths and cancelled their weaknesses. Although Lotze was rightly appreciated for his distinctions, most failed to see that the central ambition of his philosophy was to surmount all dualisms and to provide a single unified conception of the world.<sup>10</sup> No one saw more clearly than he that his distinctions were as problematic as they were strategic. Lotze’s central and characteristic doctrine—what he called “spiritualism”—arose from his attempt to resolve the apparent aporias that came from his own dualisms.

<sup>9</sup> Though the young Heidegger opposed Lotze’s legacy, no one appreciated his historical importance more. Heidegger saw Lotze as the father of the modern conception of validity, and regarded his *Logik* as “[das] Grundbuch der modernen Logik”. See his “Neuere Forschungen über Logik”, in *Frühe Schriften, Martin Heidegger Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1978), I, 23n9. See also Heidegger’s early lectures on logic, the Marburg lectures from 1925/1926, which grapple extensively with Lotze, *Gesamtausgabe* XXI, 62–88. On Heidegger’s early relationship to Lotze’s legacy and the importance he gave it, see Daniel Dahlstrom, *Heidegger’s Concept of Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 29–30, 35–47.

<sup>10</sup> As Passmore rightly saw, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, 50.

To get beyond such narrow horizons, it is necessary to adopt a more historical approach to Lotze. We need to examine Lotze's intellectual development, to investigate the origin and genesis of his philosophy; and we need to place his writings in context, to interpret them as a response to the views of predecessors and contemporaries. Only in this way can we individuate Lotze, locating his position among his contemporaries; only in this way can we reconstruct his arguments with any accuracy; and only in this way can we know *his* early ideals and interests rather than imposing our own upon him. An historical approach is indeed a necessity if we are to take account of important changes in Lotze's thinking. The standard assumption about Lotze's intellectual development—that Lotze's thinking was fundamentally continuous, the organic development of ideas he held since his youth—proves to be false.<sup>11</sup> There is no such thing as *the* philosophy of Lotze, a coherent doctrine that he held throughout his life.

For all these reasons, the following essay follows such an historical approach. It is in part philosophical study, in part intellectual biography. It attempts to give a general account of Lotze's philosophy as a whole in the context of his age and intellectual development. However, its focus is chiefly on Lotze's more neglected early works and his *Mikrokosmos*, the crowning work of his career.<sup>12</sup> There was neither space nor opportunity to re-examine the later *System der Philosophie*, which requires a large commentary of its own. The main task here is to fill a serious gap in our knowledge of Lotze, whose intellectual development has been little studied in English.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the first to express this view was Lotze's student Edmund Pfeleiderer, *Lotze's philosophische Weltanschauung nach ihre Grundzügen* (Berlin: Reimer, 1882), 6–7. But it has been reaffirmed recently, most notably by Reinhardt Pester, *Hermann Lotze: Wege seines Denkens und Forschens* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1997), 18. Though Lotze's intellectual development was indeed much more continuous than other major thinkers, viz., Herder, Kant, or Hegel, there were still important shifts and reversals in his views. We will see below that Lotze changed his mind about such fundamental issues as occasionalism, panpsychism, idealism and the foundation of ethics. His central and characteristic doctrine of "spiritualism" was developed late, only beginning in the 1850s. Lotze also became much more religious in the traditional Christian sense in reaction against the materialist currents of the 1850s. His early view of religion saw it more as a form of culture and *Bildung*.

<sup>12</sup> Georg Misch, in his editorial introduction to the 1912 edition of Lotze's *Logik*, expressed the common view of Lotze scholarship that sees the mature system as the definitive exposition of his philosophy. See his "Einleitung", *Logik: Drei Bücher, vom Denken, vom Untersuchen und vom Erkennen* (Leipzig: Meiner, 1912), x–xi. There can be no doubt that some of the formulations of the system are more authoritative than earlier expositions. They are clearer and more extensive. However, the final system was incomplete, leaving out of account the theory of value, which is the vital center of Lotze's philosophy. The sad fact remains: the only complete account we have of Lotze's philosophy as a whole is *Mikrokosmos*. To it all expositions of his thought must ultimately return.

<sup>13</sup> For the main studies of Lotze's intellectual development, see the bibliographical appendix.



## 2

# Youth and Education (Zittau and Leipzig 1817–1839)

### 1. A Romantic Youth

In a long retrospective essay, originally published in English, the ageing Lotze once wrote that “prolonged philosophical labor is nothing else but the attempt to justify, scientifically, a fundamental view of things adopted in early life”.<sup>1</sup> Clearly intended as autobiographical, that statement applies especially well to Lotze’s own philosophical development. Though there were important changes in his views, it is still true that much of his mature philosophy was an attempt to justify his early beliefs. To understand Lotze’s thought, then, we need to go back to his youth, his first formative years, those days when his first beliefs were born.

We do best to begin at the beginning.

Rudolf Hermann Lotze was born May 21, 1817, in Bautzen, the capital city of the Saxon province of Oberlausitz. His father, Karl Friedrich Lotze, was a doctor with the Saxon army, and his mother, Christiane Caroline Noack, the daughter of a Dresden schoolmaster. Together Karl Friedrich and Christiane had three children, two boys and a girl, of whom Rudolf Hermann was the youngest. Though Lotze’s roots were middle class, his family’s material circumstances were precarious. For Karl Friedrich died in February 1829, leaving the family nearly destitute. Christiane had to provide for her three children from a meager pension. The desire to escape poverty would later become a driving force behind Lotze’s career. The fear of economic destitution, the urgent need to earn a living to support himself and to help his mother, helps to explain the astonishing productivity of his early years.

When Rudolf Hermann was still an infant, his family moved to Zittau, a small town in the Oberlausitz. There he dwelled all his youth. Zittau became home, the soil in which he put down his roots. Little is known about Lotze’s first years there; his family life, personal experiences, the influences upon him, are all obscure. We

<sup>1</sup> “Philosophy in the last Forty Years”, *Kleine Schriften*, ed. David Peipers (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1855–91), III/2, 455. This essay was first published in *The Contemporary Review* 15 (1880), 134–155. This article, which is the best introduction to Lotze’s mature thought, was first written in German, then translated into English by a “Mrs. Smith”. The original German version, and a later article for the *Review*, are lost. See Peipers’ editorial comments, III/1, xl–xlvi.

do know a little, however, about his early schooling. He first attended the Zittauer Stadtschule, where he learned Latin to prepare for the Gymnasium. After that, from 1828 to 1834, he went to the Zittauer Gymnasium, which gave him a strict and solid grounding in the Latin and Greek classics. Here he also learned the basics of German composition and literature. The Gymnasium provided a weaker background, however, in natural sciences and mathematics. Instruction in natural science was rudimentary, while the learning of mathematics never got beyond mechanical reckoning. Though the curriculum was narrow and hardly inspiring, Lotze became a model student. On three occasions he received the highest grades in his class; and in his final year he was the only pupil to reach the “first level”. Such were Lotze’s achievements that he was selected to give the valedictorian address, which was a poem in Middle High German on the death of Tejas, king of the Goths. Lotze’s strengths were in languages, modern and ancient, while his weakness was in mathematics, though that probably had to do more with poor instruction than lack of aptitude, given that in later life he would do mathematics for pleasure and at a high level of sophistication. All his life Lotze kept alive the languages he mastered at the Gymnasium. Not only were his doctoral and habilitation theses written in Latin, as was customary in his day, but he translated Sophocles’ *Antigone* into Latin verse,<sup>2</sup> and he even wrote an article in Latin for the journal *Philologus*.<sup>3</sup> His French was so fluent that he supervised the translation of *Mikrokosmos*. English, it seems, he could read but not write or speak.<sup>4</sup>

Apparently, Lotze was unhappy during his Gymnasium years.<sup>5</sup> Shortly after he entered the school his father died, and thereafter he lost a beloved girlfriend. He was not made any happier by his schoolmates, who snubbed him. To deal with his grief and loneliness, Lotze became withdrawn and introspective. Wentscher, his biographer, speculates that these early traumas were the source of some dominant traits of Lotze’s personality: his formality and distance, his melancholy and taciturnity.<sup>6</sup> Whatever their source, these traits are noted by almost all Lotze’s biographers.

Later in life, in one of his few autobiographical statements about his intellectual career, Lotze wrote: “A lively inclination to poetry and art was what drove me to philosophy.”<sup>7</sup> The philosophy to which poetry pushed him, he explained, was “idealism”, and by that he meant “the philosophy of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel”, though he was quick to add “only in a general sense and not in any specific doctrinal form”. That Lotze had an inclination to poetry, and that it drove him toward idealism, are fundamental facts about his early intellectual development. This inclination and idealism are

<sup>2</sup> Hermann Lotze, *Antigona Sophoclis fabula* (Göttingen: Wigand, 1857).

<sup>3</sup> Hermann Lotze, “Quaestiones lucretianae”, *Philologus* VII (1852), 696–732. Reprinted in *Kleine Schriften*, III/1, 100–145.

<sup>4</sup> Lotze understood English well enough to correct “Philosophy in the Last Forty Years” after its publication. See Peipers’ editorial comments in *Kleine Schriften*, III/1, xl–xlvii.

<sup>5</sup> See the evidence cited in Max Wentscher, *Hermann Lotze* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1913), 7–8.

<sup>6</sup> Wentscher, *Hermann Lotze*, 8.

<sup>7</sup> *Streitschriften* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1857), 6.

apparent from his early manuscripts and letters.<sup>8</sup> In his final year at the Gymnasium he wrote poems, plays and novels, some of which are very revealing about his early interests and ideals.

One of these works is his incomplete novel *Die Deutschen*, which is a kind of *Bildungsroman* along the lines of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. Lotze's hero, Lothar, is a young aristocrat who finds himself in the same situation in life as his author: he must decide on a future career, the best kind of life for himself. Lothar abhors the life of politics, because it forces people to compromise their ideals and independence.<sup>9</sup> The best life for himself, he decides, is to be a poet; but he will be a special kind of poet, one whose mission is to express and propagate a certain worldview. According to that worldview, the universe is a living whole, a work of art, within which dwells God or the infinite, who is the source and goal of everything, that from which all originates and that to which it returns.<sup>10</sup>

This was a familiar worldview, of course, for anyone from Lotze's generation. It was the aesthetic or organic worldview of Goethe, Schiller and the early romantics. Seen from this perspective, Lothar is a reborn Heinrich von Ofterdingen, the heroic poet in Novalis' novel of that name. Just as it was Heinrich's vocation to sing about the living unity of all things, so it will be Lothar's mission to celebrate the organic wholeness of nature.

True to his professed calling, Lotze wrote poems, indeed all kinds of poems, whether odes, elegies, dramas, romances or hymns. In *Die Deutschen* Lothar described some of these productions, singling out two as especially noteworthy. One was his drama *Helena*, which he says was "his first poem devoted to a significant idea".<sup>11</sup> *Helena* was based on the story of Helen of Troy, and it was loosely modeled after Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris*. The plot is simple: Helen is haunted and harried by the Erinyes, the goddesses of vengeance, for luring men to their death in the battle for Troy; even the intervention of Aphrodite cannot save her from her cruel fate: insanity and then death. "The significant idea" behind the drama seems to have been the classical moral of Greek tragedy: that we must reconcile ourselves to fate, that we can free ourselves from suffering and guilt only when we realize that our actions are ordained by higher powers over which we have no control; what makes us suffer and feel guilty is only the illusion of a free will, the mistaken belief that we have it "in our own power to go our own way". Wentscher saw this early fatalism as one important respect in which young

<sup>8</sup> Although the manuscripts have been lost, Wentscher still had access to them in the early twentieth century and describes them in some detail. See his *Lotze*, 9–22. My account is based on his work. Wentscher did not, it seems, have access to some of Lotze's early letters, which sometimes makes it necessary to question his interpretations.

<sup>9</sup> It is a mistake to see this as indicative of Lotze's own early attitude toward politics. See Willey, *Back to Kant*, 42. See his July 17, 1833, letter to Kämmler, in *Hermann Lotze: Briefe und Dokumente*, ed. Reinhardt Pester (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), 64.

<sup>10</sup> Wentscher, *Lotze*, 14.

<sup>11</sup> Wentscher, *Lotze*, 17.

Lotze differs from mature Lotze, who defended free will.<sup>12</sup> However, it is a mistake to see the moral of *Helena* as Lotze's personal belief. The drama was simply his account of the ancient view of freedom, which he did not personally endorse. It is telling that Lotze planned to write another drama, *Saint Helena*, which would give the antithetical Christian view of freedom.<sup>13</sup>

His other important production, Lothar tells us, was his novel *Tautelmann oder das romantische Moment der Physik*. Wentscher describes this work as "the strangest product of the Lotzian muse",<sup>14</sup> though we will soon have occasion to outbid him. Judging from his account, this manuscript is a kind of fantasia, a farrago of poetry, philosophy, memories, confessions and dreams, all having only the loosest unity. The mood shifts constantly, mixing deep earnestness, satire, irony, longing and foreboding. All in all, the work appears to be that kind of quasi-autobiographical novel loved by the early romantics, a *Lucinde* of the 1830s. It interests us from a philosophical viewpoint chiefly because it contains some of Lotze's most vivid statements of his early worldview. The romantic credo—the idea that the universe is one vast living being—appears explicitly:

Here there is no body, no dead creation; life is everything, everywhere. In the smallest speck of dust lives a soul; and no soul is without a body...The creation loves men, the thoughts from God's soul, and with love the body joins the soul.<sup>15</sup>

The force that animates all, the power that holds everything together, is love: "In the end, everything that is and happens comes together in the name of love." That love is the central force behind the universe, the power that gives meaning to all, was another basic article of faith of Schiller and the early romantics. As we shall eventually see,<sup>16</sup> it returns some thirty years later as the culminating theme of *Mikrokosmos*.

One of the few extant sources for Lotze's early Zittau years is his letters to his friend, Heinrich Julius Kämmer, which were written from June 1833 to December 1834.<sup>17</sup> The letters reveal much about Lotze's thinking and values in his final year at Gymnasium. They were written during a very turbulent time in Saxon history. The early 1830s witnessed great social and political upheaval in Saxony, for these were the years of the *Vormärz*, the tense interim between the Revolution of 1830 and that of 1848. Some of the disturbing problems of Saxony's industrial revolution were already apparent: unemployment, poverty, rural depopulation. For these reasons the Paris Revolution of 1830 sent strong aftershocks throughout Saxony. There was agitation among workers in Leipzig and Dresden, where workers ran riot in the streets demanding work and better wages; and there were protests by the bourgeoisie, who demanded representation in the government, a new constitution sharing power with

<sup>12</sup> Wentscher, *Lotze*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> See Lotze to Heinrich Julius Kämmer, July 17, 1833, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 63.

<sup>14</sup> Wentscher, *Lotze*, 19.

<sup>15</sup> Wentscher, *Lotze*, 20.

<sup>16</sup> See Part II, chapter 5, section 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 54–69.

the monarch.<sup>18</sup> By 1833, when Lotze graduated from Gymnasium, the consequences of these events were still being felt and the issues raised by them remained unresolved. The world was being turned upside down, and who knew what would happen next? The young Lotze wondered how to respond to the cataclysm. "To talk about more serious things first", he wrote Hämmel in July 17, 1833, "we need to come to an understanding about our world revolution (*Weltumsturz*)."<sup>19</sup> Lotze's proposal was to form a society for the education of the public, an association that could serve as a popular forum for learning science, religion and poetry. The young Lotze believed, like so many thinkers of the *Goethezeit*, that the path to political reform had to come through *Bildung*, through the education of the public into the realm of culture. Only an educated public could act as wise and responsible citizens in the new democratic order; revolution without education was simply a recipe for ochlocracy or anarchy, a license for the mob to loot and burn.<sup>20</sup> Hence Lotze recommended that his new society be open to the people, that its members give popular lectures about science, religion and poetry, since this alone would help to create an enlightened citizenry. To make its views known to a broader public, the society would publish a journal or almanach; and so that the people could easily understand it, the journal would have a literary rather than academic form. The ultimate goal of their society, Lotze advised Kämmler, should be not the dissemination of science for its own sake but moral renewal and spiritual growth.

...the goal of our efforts should be only accidentally a scientific one and essentially a moral one. Not science as science should profit but life itself: the nobility of life and the inner sanctity of the heart. I would very much like to serve the inner word, to promote a heavenly kingdom, to witness a visible kingdom of God.<sup>21</sup>

About the form and content of this journal Lotze already had some very detailed ideas, some even more bizarre than the musings of *Tautelmann*.<sup>22</sup> The journal would have no conventional format; it would not be a periodical, i.e., a series of collected articles, but a huge multi-volume work of literature, a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. True to the romantic legacy, Lotze's aim was to create a new mythology. His journal would consist in stories, parables or fairy tales, where the characters are taken from Nordic myths. Its structure would be a trilogy: the first part covering the positive sciences, the second dealing with history, and the third outlining an ethics. Each part would have its

<sup>18</sup> On these developments, see James Sheehan, *German History 1770–1866* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 606, 607. Sheehan writes: "In 1830 the situation in Saxony was among the most volatile in Europe."

<sup>19</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 62.

<sup>20</sup> Wentscher, *Lotze*, 13, quotes this line from the lost early manuscripts: "...erst *veredle* man das Volk, ehe man irgend welche Rechte gibt; es ist nichts empörender, als ein Pöbel, der Recht behält."

<sup>21</sup> Wentscher, *Lotze*, 65.

<sup>22</sup> See Lotze to Kämmler, June 24, 1833, in *Briefe und Dokumente*, 59–60.

specific literary form: the first part would be a drama, the second an epic, and the third a novel. Volume one would be a dramatic representation of the romantic worldview. A fundamental principle of that worldview, we now learn, is “the identity of the visible and invisible”. As Lotze explains:

I am certain: no spirit can live, or even be thought, without a body; the body is a necessary plastic presentation of ethical thought; what has been united once is united forever through the law of a romantic piety.<sup>23</sup>

Lotze conceives his project on a colossal scale: “Alfadur”, the first part, would be six volumes; “Odin”, the second part, would be thirty; and “Sanghalla”, the third part, would be twenty! Though it was to be a collaborative project, its labors shared among several friends, the journal was obviously absurdly ambitious. Only an ardent youth could have conceived it. Mercifully, Lotze’s friends helped him to come to his senses, but almost too successfully, because he eventually resigned himself to writing nothing at all. Yet even here, in this quixotic monstrosity, we can glimpse something of Lotze’s future. For it was basically a multi-volumed work describing man’s place in the universe. That, in a nutshell, would be the theme and scope of his *magnum opus*, *Mikrokosmos*.

It should be already obvious that Lotze’s early religious beliefs scarcely conform to the Victorian stereotype of him. The young Lotze was no Christian theist, still less an orthodox Protestant. Although he was indeed religious, it was more in a spiritual or moral sense than a doctrinal or confessional one. Though he writes about “a visible kingdom of God”, “a kingdom of heaven”, we have to place these terms in the context of his general worldview, which is more pantheist than theist. Lotze does not distinguish the divine from the world, the spirit from the flesh, but regards the world as the embodiment of the divine, the flesh as the realization of the spirit. In a revealing passage from his July 17, 1833, letter to Kämmler, Lotze told his friend that one had to choose between two kinds of Christians: the frank, tough, open-minded and cosmopolitan kind, of which Goethe was an outstanding example, or the defensive, sensitive and tender kind, which limits itself to a tight circle of true believers. Lotze strongly suggests that he prefers the former kind. So Goethe, desecrated among the pious as a pagan, was Lotze’s model of a Christian!

It is important to place Lotze’s early religious views in their broader cultural context. Although religion was indeed important to Lotze, it was only one part of his humanist ideals. What mattered most to him was the realm of culture in general, devotion to art and science as well as morality and religion. It was through achievement in these realms that one attained what is highest and best in human beings, what he called “the nobility of life and the inner sanctity of the heart.” Like all the romantics,

<sup>23</sup> See Lotze to Kämmler, July 17, 1833, in *Briefe und Dokumente*, 64.

Lotze was a champion of *Bildung*, the realization of human excellence, which came only with the cultivation of art, morality, religion and science.<sup>24</sup> The great danger to the realm of culture in the 1830s came not from science as such, which was an integral part of culture, and still less did it come from materialism, which would not be a force to reckon with until the 1840s, at the earliest.<sup>25</sup> Rather, it came from the anarchy, anomie and egoism of the new commercial and industrial society. The fear of that society, and the need to defend the higher realm of culture against it, had been the central agenda of the early romantic generation. For Lotze, it seemed crucial to reaffirm that agenda in the 1830s, now that the new economic and political forces had become even stronger, especially in Saxony.<sup>26</sup>

After considering all these facts about Lotze's early beliefs, we can see how the roots of his philosophy lay deep in romanticism. Lotze's philosophy was indeed essentially neo-romantic, an attempt to keep alive the romantic legacy in a more materialistic and positivistic age.<sup>27</sup> The importance of his early beliefs for his later philosophy, and the location of these beliefs in the context of late romanticism, makes this conclusion inevitable. Lotze, we shall see time and again, was one of the last great romantics, the heir of Novalis, Schlegel, Schleiermacher and Schelling. To be sure, Lotze attempts to temper the romantic spirit with the methods and results of the new empirical sciences; and he was critical of the methods of the old *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling and Hegel. Still, he remains loyal to the philosophical spirit of *Naturphilosophie*, its attempt to bring metaphysics into the empirical sciences. While he was more sympathetic to mechanism than his romantic forbears, he never tired of insisting, as any romantic would, that mechanism is true only for a subordinate part of the universe as a whole.

## 2. University Years

On May 3, 1834, two weeks before his seventeenth birthday, Lotze matriculated at the University of Leipzig. His aim was to study "philosophy and natural sciences".<sup>28</sup> Because of the urgent need to earn a living, however, Lotze had to prepare for a vocation, and for this reason he chose to study medicine. Why he chose medicine over law or theology, the other vocational subjects in his age, is something of a mystery. Perhaps his reservations about the political world made the law seem unattractive; perhaps his heterodox beliefs gave him a distaste for theology; or perhaps it was simply that

<sup>24</sup> On that romantic ideal, see my "The Concept of *Bildung* in Early German Romanticism", in *The Romantic Imperative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 88–105.

<sup>25</sup> See Frederick Gregory, *Scientific Materialism in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1977), 7–8.

<sup>26</sup> The young Lotze's concern with the problems of anomie and alienation are apparent from his 1836 *Geographische Phantasien*, which we will discuss in the next section.

<sup>27</sup> In his insightful essay on Lotze's philosophy, Georg Misch posed "the essential question" what role Lotze's romantic past played in his mature philosophy. See his "Einleitung", xiii. The argument of the present essay is that this role was indeed decisive.

<sup>28</sup> Falckenberg, *Lotze*, 18.

medicine was the vocation of his father.<sup>29</sup> Whatever the reason, the choice of medicine proved fateful. For this discipline would preoccupy him for decades, and the results of its study would shape the contours of his later philosophy.

It was fortunate that Lotze chose medicine, for in the 1830s Leipzig was an exciting place to enter that field. Though in the first decades of the century it lagged behind other universities in the natural sciences, Leipzig was beginning to reform itself, introducing new curricula, faculties and facilities. It was in Leipzig in the 1830s that Gustav Theodor Fechner (1801–1877), Alfred Wilhelm Volkmann (1801–1877), and the two Weber brothers, Ernst Heinrich (1795–1878) and Eduard Friedrich (1806–1871), began to conduct their pioneering experiments in psychology and physiology. They were intent on making medicine into a science by applying to it all the experimental methods that had been used with such success in physics and chemistry. Lotze attended their lectures,<sup>30</sup> which had a decisive influence upon him, setting the standards and goals for his own study of medicine. From the Webers, Fechner and Volkmann, Lotze came to understand the crucial role of measurement, experiment and observation in the sciences, and he acquired a skepticism about the fanciful speculations of *Naturphilosophie*. This was, as Wentscher rightly put it, a realistic counterweight to his youthful idealism.<sup>31</sup>

Regarding Lotze's education in natural science, it is noteworthy that it was not simply philosophical or second-hand. Lotze did not simply read books and attend lectures; he went to great pains to acquire first-hand experience and technical expertise. Part of his medical training involved clinical practice; and he went to laboratories to conduct experiments. Lotze taught himself mathematics, and learned all the latest developments in physics. Such was his interest in the foundations of physics that he studied closely the reasoning of Newton's *Principia*.<sup>32</sup> According to Pester, it is Newton, and not Leibniz as is usually assumed, who holds the key to understanding Lotze's early metaphysics and *Naturphilosophie*.<sup>33</sup>

To understand Lotze's education, it is necessary to consider the state of the life sciences during his student years (1834–1838). The first three decades of the nineteenth century had been extraordinarily formative in the development of modern biology and physiology. The basics of biochemistry had been laid down by the work of Justus Liebig (1803–1873), Leopold Gmelin (1788–1853) and Johannes Müller (1801–1858), who taught that organic matter consists in a specific kind of chemical constitution, viz., in ternary or quaternary compounds rather than the binary compounds of

<sup>29</sup> These are Wentscher's speculations, *Lotze*, 23–24. But his conjecture that Lotze chose medicine to fight the materialists on their own scientific terms is implausible, given that the danger of materialism would become apparent only in the late 1840s.

<sup>30</sup> See "Lotzes Abgangszeugnis von der Universität Leipzig", in Eduard Rehnisch, *Zur Biographie Hermann Lotzes*, "Anhang" to Hermann Lotze, *Grundzüge der Ästhetik* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1884), 93–95.

<sup>31</sup> Wentscher, *Lotze*, 32.

<sup>32</sup> See Lotze to Ernst Friedrich Apelt, July 3, 1836, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 73.

<sup>33</sup> Pester, *Lotze*, 27. This is an exaggeration, even if it draws attention to the importance of Newton for Lotze.



inorganic matter.<sup>34</sup> In 1828 Friedrich Wöhler (1800–1882) made his great discovery that an organic compound, urea, could be prepared from inorganic materials, cyanic acid and ammonia.<sup>35</sup> Biochemistry had indeed advanced so far that by 1840 “the most distinctive and important constitutive biochemical substances were identifiable as fats, proteins and carbohydrates”.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, we must keep this progress in perspective, because some of the most important developments of modern biology would occur only later in the 1840s. When Lotze graduated from Leipzig in 1838, Theodor Schwann (1810–1882) had still not published his cell theory, which would happen only a year later.<sup>37</sup> The physicalist program in physiology of Carl Ludwig (1816–1895), Emil Du Bois-Reymond (1818–1898) and Ernst Brücke (1819–1892), which would attempt to explain all life processes on a mechanical basis, was still in its infancy and would take shape only later in the 1840s.<sup>38</sup> Helmholtz’s famous essay on energy, which would conceive of vital force as a form of physical energy, would not appear until 1847.<sup>39</sup> And the famous materialism controversy, which would dispute the apparent materialist implications of cell theory and biochemistry, would not erupt until the 1850s. So, seen from a broad perspective, the 1830s was a time of transition in biology. The physicalist program was still in gestation while many biologists still clung to the older vitalist tradition. It is indeed telling that Gmelin, Liebig and Müller, though pioneers in biochemistry, had resisted reducing living processes down to physical forces, and that they continued to defend the thesis that vital forces direct the formation of chemical compounds.

The first fruit of Lotze’s medical education at Leipzig was his dissertation *De futurae biologiae principii philosophici*,<sup>40</sup> which he submitted in July 1838 as part of his requirements for a doctorate of medicine. To a remarkable degree this little tract anticipates much of his later philosophy. Lotze begins by addressing the situation of medical studies in the 1830s. He likens it to the state of the Holy Roman Empire before its collapse: just as that Empire consisted in hundreds of small principalities quarrelling with one another over titles and privileges, so medicine consists in hundreds of theories disputing over words and concepts (1–2). The question is how we are to bring order into this chaos, i.e., how we are to put biology back on a sure footing so that it marches down

<sup>34</sup> On Liebig, Gmelin and Müller, see Thomas Hall, *Ideas of Life and Matter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), II, 258–263, 266–272.

<sup>35</sup> On the controversy surrounding Wöhler’s discovery, see Merz, *History*, I, 191–192.

<sup>36</sup> Hall, *Ideas of Life and Matter*, II, 271.

<sup>37</sup> *Mikroskopische Untersuchungen über die Uebereinstimmung in der Struktur und Wachstum der Tiere und Pflanzen* (Berlin: Reimer, 1839). It is noteworthy that Lotze personally knew Matthias Schleiden, Schwann’s collaborator in the development of the cell theory. He asks his friend Ernst Friedrich Apelt to greet him. See Lotze to Apelt, June 17, 1840, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 112.

<sup>38</sup> On the development of the physicalist program and its consequences for the older morphological tradition, see Lynn Nyhart, *Biology Takes Form: Animal Morphology and the German Universities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 66–69.

<sup>39</sup> *Über die Erhaltung der Kraft* (Berlin: Reimer, 1847).

<sup>40</sup> *De futurae biologiae principii philosophici* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1838). Reprinted in *Kleine Schriften I*, 1–25. All references in parentheses are to the latter edition.

the sure road toward science? To make any progress, biology needs to go along the same path as modern physics, i.e., it is necessary for it to explain phenomena mechanically, expressing the relationship between them in precise mathematical laws (10, 12–13). Lotze therefore condemns the still widespread tendency to postulate vital forces to explain the *sui generis* characteristics of living matter. Since these forces are assumed to transcend the mechanism that realizes them, they cannot be measured or defined, and so are mystical and obscurantist (10–11). In stressing the need for mechanical explanation and the precise measurement of biological phenomena, Lotze was very much articulating the main direction of biological research in Leipzig, the aims and methods of his mentors. However, it is striking that Lotze, much as he would do in his later writings, already stresses the *limits* of mechanical explanation. Such explanation is limited, he argues, because it cannot explain the origin of the phenomena that it subsumes under laws; its laws are always hypothetical, i.e., they assume that “if X, then Y”, leaving it open whether X occurs in the first place (13). Furthermore, mechanical explanation deals solely with facts, with what is the case, so that it has nothing to say about norms, about what ought to be the case (13). Lotze is also far from thinking that mechanism is the sole form of explanation in biology; he strongly re-affirms the importance of teleology, of explaining organisms by their purposes or ends (5). Explanation in terms of ends or goals is necessary and not objectionable as long as it does not interfere with determining the precise mechanism by which they are realized. There are in nature dynamical principles as well as mechanical ones. These dynamical principles involve “ideals or plastic essences” (*idealem seu transcendetem plasticam*), which act through mechanisms but are not reducible to them (14–15). Toward the close of the dissertation Lotze re-invokes the spirit of Leibniz, whose doctrine of the pre-established harmony anticipates his own view about the equal importance and complementarity of mechanism and teleology (22). The defense of teleology, the insistence on mechanism, the distinction between norms and facts, the critique of vital forces, and the ideal to combine teleology and mechanism—all these themes of the dissertation will re-appear in Lotze’s mature writings.

At Leipzig Lotze studied not only medicine but also philosophy. His philosophical education there was dominated by one central figure: Christian Hermann Weiße (1801–1866). Lotze went to no lectures but his, and he went to every one he could.<sup>41</sup> He heard Weiße lecture on aesthetics, philosophy of religion and the history of philosophy. According to Lotze’s own testimony, Weiße was a decisive figure in his intellectual development, not only because he broadened his horizons but also because he imparted to him a circle of ideas he forever held dear.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, Lotze does not specify what these ideas were.<sup>43</sup> To compound the obscurity, Weiße is a hard figure to

<sup>41</sup> Rehnisch, *Biographie*, 93–94.

<sup>42</sup> *Streitschriften*, 6. See also Lotze to Hermann Christian Weiße, October 3, 1838, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 95.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Falckenberg speculates that the circle of ideas concerns “*der Persönlichkeitspantheismus und die 3 Gewalten des Weltbaues: Gesetze, Tatsachen und Werte*”. See his ‘Hermann Lotze, sein Verhältnis zu Kant und Hegel und zu den Problemen der Gegenwart’, in *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik*, 150 (1913), 40. This is a very plausible hypothesis.

pin down.<sup>44</sup> An eclectic but independent spirit, he attempted to combine the best of Schelling and Hegel, “the system of freedom” and “the system of necessity”, though it was unclear precisely how he joined them. Weiße still had a living connection with the idealist tradition, having attended Hegel’s lectures in Berlin and having corresponded with Schelling. His chief claim to fame is having written one of the first critiques of Hegel’s philosophy, his *Ueber den gegenwärtigen Standpunct der philosophischen Wissenschaften*,<sup>45</sup> which appeared in 1829, a full decade before Feuerbach’s *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie*. Weiße argued that Hegel’s speculative logic cannot do justice to the concrete facts of the empirical world, which are contingent and temporal, and therefore fall outside the domain of logic, which is limited to necessary and eternal relationships in thought.<sup>46</sup> The basic error of Hegel’s system is that it confuses “the foundation for essence, form for content, the concept for the idea and thing itself.”<sup>47</sup> These teachings about the limits of Hegelian rationalism, which were inspired by Schelling,<sup>48</sup> were soon passed onto the young Lotze, who assimilated and extended them.

Though greatly influenced by Weiße, Lotze was also critical of him, even during his early student years. The main stumbling block between teacher and student lay with the lingering Hegelian elements in Weiße’s thought. Though Weiße himself had objected to Hegel’s excessive rationalism, he was still too much of a rationalist for his young student. For Weiße was still a firm believer in, and practitioner of, the key instrument of Hegelian rationalism: the dialectic. In *Standpunct* he declared that Hegel’s logic is unsurpassable, and that the dialectic is the basis for the form or structure, if not the content, of all the natural sciences.<sup>49</sup> Although he soon had misgivings about the infallibility of Hegel’s exposition, Weiße continued to believe that the dialectic is the proper method of science. It was the task of his 1835 *Grundzüge der Metaphysik* to demonstrate the enduring validity of the dialectic, first by improving its exposition, and then by showing how it could be applied to experience.<sup>50</sup> For the young Lotze, however, Hegel’s dialectic had no validity even for the form of the sciences, let alone the content.<sup>51</sup> In his view, the problem with Hegel’s system lay more with its principle than its application, more with its method than its results.

<sup>44</sup> For a good general portrait, see Olaf Brieske, “Im Geflecht der Schulen. Christian Hermann Weißes akademisches Karriere”, in *Konkurrenzen: Philosophische Kultur in Deutschland 1830–1850* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1998), 65–77.

<sup>45</sup> Hermann Christian Weiße, *Ueber den gegenwärtigen Standpunct der philosophischen Wissenschaft. In besonderer Beziehung auf das System Hegels* (Leipzig: Barth, 1829).

<sup>46</sup> Weiße, *Ueber den gegenwärtigen Standpunct*, 129–136, 147, 169, 174, 186.

<sup>47</sup> Weiße, *Ueber den gegenwärtigen Standpunct*, 209.

<sup>48</sup> Weiße discusses Schelling constantly but refers to no specific text with regard to his critique of Hegel. Schelling began his critique of Hegel in his *System der Weltalter* (1827–8).

<sup>49</sup> Weiße, *Ueber den gegenwärtigen Standpunct*, 11, 163, 174.

<sup>50</sup> See the ‘Vorrede’, *Grundzüge der Metaphysik* (Hamburg: Perthes, 1835), x–xi. See also 68–75, where Weiße explains how his use of the dialectic differs from Hegel’s.

<sup>51</sup> I cannot accept Bamberger’s contention, *Untersuchungen*, 46, that the young Lotze was a devotee of Herbart’s method of relations and that this motivated him to reject Hegel’s dialectic. There is no evidence that Lotze ever followed Herbart’s method; and in his *Streitschriften*, 6, he expressly repudiates any substantial debts to Herbart.

Already in the late 1830s we can see signs that Lotze was becoming skeptical of that Hegelian method his teacher was so keen to rehabilitate. Though he would sometimes discuss metaphysics with Weiße, he felt that their discussions were pointless because their disagreements were so basic.<sup>52</sup> He complained that Weiße, contrary to his own strictures, simply applied the general concepts of his philosophy to phenomena without investigating them for their own sake. In short: Weiße's *Naturphilosophie* simply had no solid basis in experience. The shortcomings of Weiße's metaphysics would soon become for Lotze representative of the general problems of Hegelian rationalism. It taught him that one could not go halfway in rejecting Hegel: not only the practice but the principle had to go.

Another formative figure for Lotze during his student years was Gustav Theodor Fechner, surely one of the most remarkable figures of nineteenth-century German science and philosophy.<sup>53</sup> Fechner would later become famous for two apparently conflicting achievements: his psychophysics, which is generally regarded as a major contribution to empirical psychology; and his panpsychical and mystical philosophy of nature. All his life Fechner would be torn in these two directions: he was seduced by the *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling and Oken; but he was also a devotee of exacting empirical research in physics and psychology. Fechner quickly became disillusioned with Schelling and Oken, convinced that no progress in science could be made by following their methods. In an early satirical essay, published under the pseudonym 'Dr. Mises', he even poked fun at the methods of *Naturphilosophie*.<sup>54</sup> While the ancient Egyptians built their pyramids starting from the base, Schelling and Oken built theirs beginning from the summit, balancing the whole weight of the enormous structure on a single subtle principle.<sup>55</sup> Yet, for all Dr. Mises' ridicule of *Naturphilosophie*, Prof. Fechner had an ambivalent attitude toward it. He attempted to distance himself from the deductive methods of *Naturphilosophie*, its use of first principles and a priori constructions, and he stressed that his own method was based entirely on analogy and induction; nevertheless, he still believed in the need to conjecture about the inner side of nature and the value of making generalizations about the universe as a whole.<sup>56</sup> Analogy was the guiding thread of *Naturphilosophie*, and by confidently following that method Fechner would speculate in great detail about the

<sup>52</sup> See Lotze to Ernst Friedrich Apelt, October 30, 1836, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 75. See also Lotze to Apelt, February 18, 1837, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 86.

<sup>53</sup> On Fechner, see Kurd Lasswitz, *Gustav Theodor Fechner*, Zweite Auflage (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1902) and Max Wentscher, *Fechner und Lotze* (Munich: Reinhardt, 1924). The chief source on Fechner's life is the biography by his student Johannes Kuntze, *Gustav Theodor Fechner: Ein deutsches Gelehrtenleben* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1882). For a recent attempt to rehabilitate Fechner, see Michael Hamburger, *Nature from Within: Gustav Theodor Fechner and His Psychophysical Worldview* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004).

<sup>54</sup> Dr. Mises, *Beweis, daß der Mond aus Iodine bestehe*, Zweite Auflage (Leipzig: Voß, 1832). The work first appeared in 1821.

<sup>55</sup> Dr. Mises, *Beweis, daß der Mond*, 12.

<sup>56</sup> Fechner's methodological reflections are in the "Vorrede" to his *Zend-Avesta: oder über die Dinge des Himmels und des Jenseits vom Standpunkt der Naturbetrachtungen* (Leipzig: Voß, 1851), iv, xix–xxiv.

souls of plants and stars, the existence of angels and life after death.<sup>57</sup> Never were Schelling or Oken so daring!

When Lotze first met him in the 1830s, however, Fechner's main achievements still lay ahead of him. He was then known chiefly for his satirical essays, for his translations of the works of the French physicists Jean-Baptiste Biot and Louis-Jacques Thénard, and for his experiments on electromagnetism, galvanism and color perception.<sup>58</sup> In 1834 Fechner had become ordinary professor of physics in Leipzig, and it was probably in that role that Lotze first met him. It was from Fechner that Lotze would learn the basics of physics, and the role of the exact measurement and observation in the physical sciences. We can get a good idea of the impression Fechner made upon him from his December 30, 1836, letter to Ernst Friedrich Apelt, where he describes a charming conversation he recently had with Fechner.<sup>59</sup> A champion of atomism, Fechner had a way of making it come alive: If the solar system could be made of smaller objects, such as planets, why not ordinary objects themselves? It was indeed amazing how what seemed to be continuous and solid in sense perception is really composed of discrete atoms. Though charmed by Fechner's vivid exposition, Lotze was not entirely overwhelmed. Already a note of skepticism crept in: "one cannot expect from him", he warned Apelt, "a scientific justification for such a view". This early conversation with Fechner set the tone for what would become a long, fruitful and fateful friendship. All his life Lotze would be both charmed by and skeptical of Fechner. He greatly respected him; but he could not follow him. He learned from him; but he also criticized him. He too wanted to keep alive the tradition of *Naturphilosophie* and on a more empirical basis; but he believed that Fechner had gone beyond his own self-imposed limits.<sup>60</sup>

During his student years in Leipzig, Lotze not only attended lectures and prepared his dissertation; he also wrote, though only occasionally, philosophical essays of his own. The two extant essays we have from these years are interesting documents of his philosophical development. One of them, entitled "Geographische Phantasien",<sup>61</sup> was an address written in 1836 for a small circle of friends from Zittau. Having just returned to Leipzig after a visit home, Lotze reflected on the feelings his hometown evoked in him. But this exercise in romantic "*Sehnsucht*" and "*Heimweh*" became the

<sup>57</sup> Fechner's book on the soul of plants is his *Nanna, oder über das Seelenleben der Pflanze* (Leipzig, Voß, 1848); that on the soul of the planets and stars is *Zend-Avesta*, as cited in the previous note. His work on angels is his *Vergleichende Anatomie der Engel* (Leipzig: Industrie Comptoir, 1825); and his work on immortality is his *Das Büchlein vom Leben nach dem Tode* (Dresden: Grimmer, 1836). Though both appeared under the pseudonym 'Dr. Mises', they were not intended, at least entirely, as fiction, since some of their speculations re-appear in *Zend-Avesta*. As Wentscher notes, *Fechner und Lotze*, 22–23, Fechner's literary play was a mask for his serious speculations.

<sup>58</sup> On these early works, see the bibliography in Kuntze, *Fechner*, 363–366.

<sup>59</sup> Lotze, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 79.

<sup>60</sup> See Lotze's later review of *Nanna*, *Kleine Schriften*, II, 505–512.

<sup>61</sup> The essay appears in *Kleine Schriften* III/2, 567–573. Wentscher dates its composition as 1836.

occasion for more general reflections about the problems of modernity and the relationship between mind and nature. Lotze asks: "What is it about the earth, the soil and the home that they so strongly bind the mind to themselves?" (568). He regrets how in the modern world we have lost the intimate bonds with nature and community that were once so important for the ancient world. Ancient man divinized his world and fatherland because he felt at home in them, and because he realized that his very identity depended upon them. Modern man, however, has forgotten or repressed these bonds because of the pressures of daily business and the restrictions of the division of labor (569). The modern aspiration toward freedom and self-consciousness has made him sever his bonds to nature and fatherland, so that he no longer feels at home in his world. The price of modern freedom and self-awareness has therefore been detachment and alienation. While Lotze laments this predicament, he also recognizes that the aspiration toward freedom is necessary and important. "The mind should be for itself, and liberate itself to emerge from finite necessity." (571) The solution to the problem is for man to restore through his creative activity the identity with nature and fatherland that were once given to him in his youth. If we only strive to return to the unity we once enjoyed, freedom can restore for us what it has taken away from us. We can again become one with our world through a double process: by externalizing or embodying our inner activities in it, and by internalizing or appropriating it according to our inner needs (574). The central message of Lotze's essay was thus an old romantic trope: that through freedom we can recreate our lost unity with the world.

Beside his romantic musings about the problem of modernity, Lotze's "Phantasien" also engages in some general reflections on the relationship between mind and nature. These reflections are very much in accord with the romantic views he expressed in his early fragments. We should not separate the mind from nature, he writes, because each becomes what it is only through the other. Nature realizes itself through mind, while the mind has to embody itself in nature. We seem to be reading Schelling when Lotze proclaims: "The idea of nature is also that of the mind, only what is subconscious in the former is conscious in the latter" (573). We are told that there are two false ways of theorizing about the relationship between mind and nature. One tends toward materialism because it explains all mental life on the basis of the physical characteristics of the environment; the other tends toward idealism because it intellectualizes the environment by seeing it as only a product of our moral and intellectual activity (571). While Lotze rejects both extreme views, he is not very clear in spelling out his own. It is remarkable, though, that he had already raised the central problem of his later work, and that he already rejected the two extreme solutions to it. His later philosophy will attempt to explain the relationship between mind and nature while not falling into the extremes of idealism and materialism. It is no less noteworthy that, for the sake of his metaphysical principles, Lotze is willing to abandon belief in personal immortality. Since the identity of the self is determined by the specific time and place in which it lives, it is, just like everything else in nature, immortal not as an individual but only as

a species (573). Here again the young Lotze shows himself to be far from Christian orthodoxy.<sup>62</sup>

The other important essay from Lotze's student years is his "Pensées d'un Idiote sur Descartes, Spinoza et Leibnitz",<sup>63</sup> which was probably written sometime in 1838.<sup>64</sup> This essay, written in poetic but imperfect French, is partly an historical account of Descartes', Spinoza's and Leibniz's solutions to the mind-body problem; but, more importantly, it is also an argument in behalf of Leibniz's solution. It is in Lotze's defense of Leibniz that the chief interest of the essay lies; for Lotze would later say that he was led to his own philosophy by walking through "the door of the Leibnizian world of monads".<sup>65</sup> What door led him into that fanciful and fabled realm? It was the same door through which Schelling had walked a generation or so earlier, the door marked "*vis viva*". Leibniz made this concept the very heart of his ontology, seeing each individual substance as a centre of living force. The entire universe is alive for him, and mind and matter are only different degrees of organization, development and perfection of living force (561, 565). According to Lotze, Leibniz does not really think that mind and matter are distinct substances which interact solely by virtue of a pre-established harmony ordained by God in the beginning of things; rather, he holds that matter is not a proper substance at all because it consists in nothing more than monads, though, to be sure, monads at their lowest level of activity and in a deep sleep (561). The essence of each monad consists in its "power of specification", i.e., the particular way in which it realizes and develops its inherent forces (562). Lotze then gives this doctrine a Spinozian twist by claiming that Leibniz makes Spinoza's two attributes, thought and extension, into properties of each monad rather than a single infinite substance (563). The attribute of extension means that a monad is passive and fills space; and the attribute of thought means that it is active and has the power of self-awareness. But Leibniz's attributes are not completely independent, as they are in Spinoza, because they are capable of interaction with one another. What allows thought to act upon extension, and conversely, is simply the fact that they are different degrees of living force (565). When the mind perceives a body, for example, it "spiritualizes" that body, i.e., it realizes, organizes and develops the latent and inchoate forces already inherent in the body (565). The perceptions of the monad therefore constitute the "essence" or "meaning" of the body, because they realize its implicit, inchoate and subconscious forces. It is in Lotze's interpretation of Leibniz that we shall find the key to understanding his own later solution to the mind-body problem, which we will examine below.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> In his later years Lotze took a softer stance on the Christian belief in immortality, which he accepted on ethical grounds. See his *Grundzüge der Religionsphilosophie* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1884), 64, §79.

<sup>63</sup> *Kleine Schriften* III/2, 551–566.

<sup>64</sup> For the dating I follow the arguments of Wentscher, *Lotze*, 357–358, n23.

<sup>65</sup> Lotze, *Streitschriften*, 7.

<sup>66</sup> See Part II chapter 4, section 2.



### 3. Zittau Interlude

After receiving his medical degree in July 1838, Lotze returned to Zittau to practice medicine. In August 18 he published a notice in a local paper advertising his services as a doctor. As it happened, Lotze did practice medicine, at least for a little while,<sup>67</sup> though it must be said his heart was not in the work. Ironically, the champion of locality in the *Geographische Phantasien* found it difficult to re-establish roots. After the pleasures of Leipzig, Zittau seemed utterly provincial, a confining and harsh place. We know about Lotze's state of mind then from his October 3, 1838, letter to Weiße, where he moans about his loneliness, his isolation from the world of culture, and his lack of opportunity to write philosophy.<sup>68</sup> He feared that, unless he were to leave it soon, Zittau would prove the graveyard of his fondest hopes, the sinkhole for his ambition to be someone in the intellectual world. And so Lotze swore to Weiße: he would not stay longer than Easter.

To understand Lotze's despondency in Zittau, we should consider what he was missing. For any ambitious young Saxon, Leipzig had an irresistible lure. Since the end of the eighteenth century, it had become the cultural capital of Germany. The city was filled with coffee houses, bookstores and inns. It was the center of the German book trade, and its university was one of the largest in Germany. The concerts at the *Gewandhaus*, where Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy was *Kapellmeister*, had become famous throughout Europe. And, in the late 1830s, its art associations held some of the first exhibitions of paintings in Germany. Last but not least, there were many literary salons where artists, philosophers and scholars would discuss the latest cultural and political events. All in all, a rich cultural offering which no up-and-coming intellectual could afford to miss.

Now that he had left his Paris, Lotze had to make the best of life down on the farm. Rather than devoting himself to medicine, he used his time in Zittau to prepare himself for an academic career. It seems the sheer isolation of the place, the complete absence of distraction, allowed him to focus on his work. His productivity during these long and lonely months was indeed astonishing. It was in Zittau that he published his first reviews and articles, wrote the first drafts of his *Metaphysik*, studied Herbart's philosophy, sketched his *Habilitationsschrift*, and worked out the ideas for his *Allgemeine Pathologie*.<sup>69</sup> And, if this were not enough, he continued to indulge in his old avocation: poetry. Old poems were revised, new ones composed, and then collected and published in a book.<sup>70</sup> Given his early poetic ambitions, it was only fitting that his first book would be a collection of poems.

<sup>67</sup> Wentscher, *Lotze*, 358n26.

<sup>68</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 95–96.

<sup>69</sup> Wentscher, *Lotze*, 42.

<sup>70</sup> *Gedichte* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1840). Lotze's poems add little or nothing to the formation of his general worldview beyond what already appears in the early fragments. The poems are filled with romantic themes, viz., *Sehnsucht* and *Heimweh*. Moritz Kronenberg wrote, rightly, that what prevails throughout them is "die romantische Grundbestimmung". See his account of the poems in his 'Hermann Lotze, Seine Weltanschauung und Geistesart', in *Moderne Philosophen* (Munich: Beck, 1899), 51–55.



In some of his early Zittau articles Lotze began to sketch the rudiments of his later philosophy. One of these is a substantial review of Karl Wilhelm Stark's *Allgemeine Pathologie* for the *Hallische Jahrbücher*.<sup>71</sup> The review is significant less for Lotze's views on Stark's pathological theory than for his reflections on philosophical method. The young Lotze is often portrayed as a stalwart empiricist, as an ardent advocate of mechanism in physiology, and as a severe critic of the older speculative *Naturphilosophie*. This early article shows that this portrait is only half accurate. For even in these early years Lotze was also a harsh critic of empiricism and mechanism, and a resolute defender of aspects of *Naturphilosophie*. In the opening pages of the review Lotze attempts to steer a middle path between two antagonistic conceptions of method in physiology. One is the radical empiricist view that the method of physiology should consist in strict observation and experiment, in the patient accumulation of data, where theory is formed simply from combining data and summarizing them; the other is the more rationalist view of *Naturphilosophie*, according to which general principles are necessary to direct enquiry and to bring out the significance of phenomena. Stark was an advocate of the former view, Schelling and his disciples representatives of the latter. Although Lotze is sympathetic to the empiricists' complaints about the abuses and excesses of *Naturphilosophie*—the Schellingians had forced their principles upon the facts without investigating them for their own sake—his express intention is to defend the “speculative reflection” (*speculativen Betrachtung*) of *Naturphilosophie* against hardcore empiricists like Stark (27–28). We need to have general principles in physiology, Lotze argues, because they are necessary to direct enquiry, to ask the right questions, to select appropriate evidence, and to interpret the significance of the results. Lotze does not think that these general principles are immune from testing and falsification, and he indeed insists that physiology has made progress only through a method of experimentation; nevertheless, he stresses that principles and hypotheses are necessary to guide experiment in the first place. To be sure, collecting evidence carefully and impartially is necessary; but it is never sufficient because we also need to ask questions and to interpret the meaning of empirical results. In Lotze's more graphic terms: “It is granted to the sensible eye to be the portal through which the form of the goddess first appears...but the divine itself is only for the understanding” (31). The need for general principles in physiology shows, Lotze believes, that metaphysics is still vital for the special sciences (30–31). This belief in the value and necessity of metaphysics, here defended so clearly and firmly for the first time, will never leave Lotze. It will be the chief rationale for his early and later metaphysics.

The Stark review is not only a defense of *Naturphilosophie* but also an appraisal of the general state of contemporary physiology. The problem with physiology nowadays,

<sup>71</sup> Recension zu Karl Wilhelm Stark, *Allgemeine Pathologie oder allgemeine Naturlehre der Krankheiten*, in *Hallische Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst*, Nr. 194–195 (1839), 1545–1592; reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* I, 26–62. All references in parentheses are to this later edition.

Lotze complains, is that it lacks orientation, a sense of where its problems lie and how to pursue them. This is precisely where it needs the aid of *Naturphilosophie*, which will provide it with goals and guidelines. There are three tasks that physiology should pursue, Lotze argues. First, it should determine the mechanical interplay of forces and the mathematical laws at work behind the parts of an organism. Second, it should attempt to understand an organism as a whole and not limit itself to examining only the interaction of its parts. Third, it should determine what is characteristic of life and how it differs from non-living things (33–34). Lotze's account of the tasks of physiology here reiterates his earlier view in the dissertation, and anticipates his later view in the *Allgemeine Physiologie*, that the mechanical approach is necessary but not sufficient for the understanding of life. We need *Naturphilosophie* to complement mechanical methods, because they alone show us the “meaning” or “significance” of the mathematical laws. Assuming that everything happens according to mechanical and mathematical laws, the question remains what these laws “mean”, i.e., what they are appearances or phenomena of? Their meaning consists in their “constitutive concepts”, the concepts which grasp each phenomenon in its individuality (34). What Lotze seems to have in mind by these concepts, though he provides no explanation, is Leibniz's “notion” or “concept” of a substance.

Lotze pondered methodological issues from a very different angle in another article from the Zittau period, his “Heilmethoden und Heilmaximen der neueren Zeit”, which appeared in 1840 in the *Hallische Jahrbücher*.<sup>72</sup> This article too was a review, a critique of Burkhard Elbe's *Pragmatische Geschichte der Arzneikunst*,<sup>73</sup> which was a history of recent medicine from an Hegelian perspective. It was also a thorough assessment of the various forms of medical treatment prevalent in his day, viz., homeopathy, allopathy, Brownianism, hydrotherapy. The chief interest in this review from a philosophical perspective, however, also lies in its methodological reflections. Lotze's attention is directed at the proper methodology for the history of medicine, and the tenor of his remarks is in stark contrast to his earlier review, for now he focuses on the vices rather than virtues of beginning with general principles. It is as if the intellectualist perspective of the former article has to be corrected or balanced by a more empirical approach. Lotze counters Elbe's Hegelian perspective with a very un-Hegelian reminder of his own: that history is governed by not only a principle of order but also one of disorder (1249). This disorder appears in its many disparate, even conflicting, medical theories, and in the need to respond in an *ad hoc* manner to particular cases of disease. Elbe's appeal to the *Zeitgeist* is worthless in explaining historical details, Lotze argues, because that concept is so vague that it is compatible with anything.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Heilmethoden und Heilmaximen der neueren Zeit’, *Hallische Jahrbücher für deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst*, Nr. 157–160 (1840), 1249–1275. All citations are to this edition. Peipers failed to include this article in his edition of the *Kleine Schriften*. The article has been reprinted in Rudolph Hermann Lotze, *Kleine Schriften zur Psychologie*, ed. Reinhardt Pester (Heidelberg: Springer, 1989), 79–93.

<sup>73</sup> Burkard Elbe, *Pragmatische Geschichte der Arzneikunst* (Vienna: Karl Gerold, 1840).

Furthermore, we cannot understand the history of medicine simply by studying the history of medical theories. For these theories actually have had little influence on the actual practice of medicine, where doctors are led more by precedent and observation. The history of medicine is really about a struggle between the spirit and its physical conditions, and that is a battle between the wits of a particular doctor and a particular case of a disease (1251–1252). The intellectualist approach to medical history assumes that theory dictates practice, but really the very opposite is the case: theory follows practice (1257). While Lotze does not disavow the value of general theory in physiology, his emphasis now is on the need to develop theory from piecemeal induction and practice. The present state of medicine is too chaotic and underdeveloped to form reliable general laws. The ideal of a mathematical medicine, which has laws like those of physics, is a dream (1258); and there are not even general qualitative, let alone quantitative, laws about how the different functions of the body interact with one another (1258, 1262). The best way forward in medicine, Lotze advises, is to build on natural history and the many observations of medical practitioners (1262).

It was also probably in Zittau that Lotze wrote another formative article, “Bemerkungen über den Begriff des Raumes”.<sup>74</sup> This short piece is Lotze’s attempt to settle accounts with his former teacher, a formal statement of his basic disagreements with Weiße. Lotze now focuses on one central doctrine of Weiße’s metaphysics: that the three-dimensions of space are an eternal conceptual structure reflecting the three moments of the Hegelian concept.<sup>75</sup> According to Weiße, space is simply “*the existence of the pure metaphysical category of self-positing essence in the triplicity of its moments.*”<sup>76</sup> Space has three dimensions—length, width and height—just as the category of essence has its three moments of particularity, individuality and universality. In thus deriving space from the moments of the concept, Weiße believed that he had overcome some of the abstractness of the Hegelian logic, whose dialectic needed application to the world of space and time.<sup>77</sup> For Lotze, however, Weiße’s belief was pure illusion. The construction of the three-dimensions of space from the three moments of the concept illustrated the basic problem of an excessive rationalism: that it failed to recognize the basic differences between thought and intuition. The derivation could work only by using a superficial analogy—the metaphor of triplicity—to blur the basic differences between

<sup>74</sup> “Bemerkungen über den Begriff des Raums. Sendschreiben an D. Christian Weiße”, in *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und spekulative Theologie* 8 (1841), 1–24; *Kleine Schriften* I, 86–108. Although this article was not published until 1841, there are reasons for assuming that its composition was much earlier, and indeed in the Zittau year. After Lotze returned to Leipzig in July 1840, he complained that all his time was taken up preparing lectures and his habilitation thesis. The epistolary form of the essay suggests that it was written while Lotze was away from Leipzig; it would have been a response to Weiße’s request that they continue their philosophical discussions through correspondence. See Weiße to Lotze, November 23, 1838, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 97. In any case, the ideas in the essay articulate thoughts that Lotze had while still a student in Leipzig. See especially his February 18, 1837, letter to Ernst Friedrich Apelt, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 85–86.

<sup>75</sup> See Weiße, *Grundzüge der Metaphysik*, 317–357.

<sup>76</sup> Weiße, *Grundzüge der Metaphysik*, 354.

<sup>77</sup> Weiße, *Grundzüge der Metaphysik*, 355.

thought and intuition. All this becomes clear, Lotze contends, from an examination of the basic premise of Weiße's construction. He assumes that space in its very essence is three-dimensional, that the three right angles used to construct length, width and height exhaust the nature of extension itself. But in making this assumption Weiße confuses a mere conceptual convenience in measuring and reckoning spaces with the essence of space itself. When we measure angles in trigonometry by constructing right angles, Lotze argues, we are not reducing all the directions of space down to three but we are simply calculating the place or size of a figure (90–91). It is a basic axiom of geometry that from a given point an infinite number of lines can be drawn, and that corresponding to each of these lines there is an infinite number of directions in space. All these directions are in principle unique and irreducible to one another. We can make them commensurable through trigonometry, but this does not mean that their infinity is reducible to three dimensions alone. The mere existence of a curved line shows us that we cannot reduce all spatial directions down to the right angles of trigonometry, which only approximate its real features.

From these arguments Lotze went on to draw some significant conclusions. The infinity of space, its irreducibility to conceptual structures and measuring devices, demonstrates that we have to know it directly through intuition. This only goes to show, Lotze contends, that Kant was right in thinking space, time and movement to be pure intuitions (103). In general, Kant was correct in making a sharp distinction between the concepts by which we think about this world and the intuitions by which we give content to them (105). Breaking utterly with Hegel's rationalism, Lotze declares that metaphysics has to be built on a completely new foundation, one that recognizes the fundamental difference between thought and intuition (105). Here lay part of the rationale for Lotze's later metaphysics, which would indeed begin on this new basis.

The early article on space is interesting for another reason: Lotze states firmly his attitude toward Hegel's dialectic, the very method Weiße had attempted to rehabilitate. He leaves no doubt in his reader's mind—the article was addressed to Weiße—that he finds no merit whatsoever in the Hegelian method. He condemns its obscurity, arbitrariness and artificiality. The dialectic is not a method of discovery of new concepts, but simply a method of exposition of already known ones (100). It derives its results only because its principles have already been read into the evidence. In a final damning conclusion, Lotze flatly states that the dialectic is not “a competent judge on the connection between even moderately complex thoughts” (104). With that, Lotze had bid the dialectic adieu and drawn his line in the sand before his teacher.<sup>78</sup> It was

<sup>78</sup> Later, in 1845, his independence less an issue, Lotze could afford to be more generous in his appraisal of Hegel's dialectic. In his review of Gustav Hartenstein's *Die Grundbegriffe der ethischen Wissenschaften* he defended Hegel's dialectic against Hartenstein's criticisms that it was only arbitrary fantasy masked with an illusion of scientific justification. See *Kleine Schriften* I, 275–277. But Lotze's defense of the method was hardly an endorsement of it; indeed, the problem of Hartenstein's critique is that, in his view, it missed the real problems with Hegel's method.

a tribute to Weiße's open-mindedness and generosity that their friendship remained intact.

With the spring of 1840 approaching, Lotze's stay in Zittau was drawing to a close. Though eager to leave, he found it hard to extricate himself. There were not only patients and friends, but there was also a commitment of a completely new and unexpected kind: a fiancée. Toward the end of his stay, Lotze had found enough time and energy outside philosophy to become engaged to the daughter of a pastor from a neighboring village, one Ferdinande Hoffmann. For the solitary and withdrawn philosopher, life now offered an altogether pleasing but unexpected prospect: domestic happiness.

Still, Ferdinande, whatever her charms, was not enough to tie down this ambitious young man. Rather than earning a modest but secure living as a provincial doctor in Zittau, Lotze resolved to continue down the precarious and impecunious path of an academic career. He now planned to habilitate in Leipzig and to give lectures there. Sure enough, by May 1840 he was back in his mecca.

## Early Metaphysics and Logic (Leipzig, 1839–1844)

### 1. First Metaphysics

Lotze quickly established himself in Leipzig, finding modest lodgings there on the first floor of Number 786 *An der Wasserkunst*. Shortly after his arrival, he wrote his friend Ernst Friedrich Apelt to describe his new situation.<sup>1</sup> Poverty, as usual, was staring him in the face. Before he could earn a living from the university, he would be an old man. To escape that dire fate he had hit upon an ambitious but quixotic plan. He would write “a bigger independent work”, one that would give him “an entrée into the literary world.” Though busy preparing his lectures and moving his belongings, Lotze said that he was more occupied with the book. What kind of book exactly? He did not say. It was almost certainly, though, what he eventually called his *Metaphysik*, which appeared in early 1841.<sup>2</sup>

While it did not give him fame and riches, the *Metaphysik* was still an important literary debut all the same. It was Lotze’s first major philosophical publication, his first public statement of his worldview. The *Metaphysik* was indeed an astonishing *tour de force*, all the more so for a twenty-four year old. It contains compelling criticisms of Lotze’s contemporaries, especially Herbart and Weiße, and it outlines an original and bold conception of metaphysics all its own. Lotze was intent on nothing less than a revolution, a “reversal” of the traditional ways of thinking in metaphysics.<sup>3</sup> Though he would later refine and qualify many points, the *Metaphysik* laid down the basis for much of his mature philosophy.

Lotze’s early metaphysics is both a radical critique and a spirited defense of his youthful heritage, the idealist tradition of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. On the one hand, Lotze attacks this tradition for its hyper-rationalism, hypostases of abstract concepts, and transcendence of ordinary experience. In making these criticisms he was

<sup>1</sup> Lotze to Ernst Friedrich Apelt, May 18, 1839, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 103.

<sup>2</sup> Hermann Lotze, *Metaphysik* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1841). This is the only edition of this work. All references are first to the page number and then to the paragraph number, indicated by the “§” sign.

<sup>3</sup> Lotze refers to his work as a “reversal” (*Umkehrung*) of past practices in his article “Herbart’s Ontologie”, *Kleine Schriften*, I, 135. This article, which appeared in 1843, supplies much of the context behind the *Metaphysik*.

deliberately re-invoking the critical spirit of Kant, which was for him the best antidote against metaphysical excess. On the other hand, however, Lotze also defends the idealist tradition against its most compelling contemporary foe, Herbart, who had dismissed its teleological view of the world as a confusion of the normative and natural, the practical and theoretical. The only way to escape the aporias of Herbart's own naturalistic metaphysics, Lotze argues, is to return to the teleological conception of the world of the great idealists.

The *Metaphysik* is true to the romantic worldview Lotze had expressed in his early poems and fragments, and it is indeed intended to be its deepest vindication. Lotze continues to believe in the unity of nature, the identity of subject and object, the single animating force behind all things; and he reaffirms his belief that the purpose or meaning of the cosmos finds its highest realization in human experience. Now, however, these grand ideas are placed on a more solid and sophisticated foundation, one more in accord with Kant's critical guidelines. The rationale for idealist metaphysics, we learn, lies not in the realm of theory but in that of practice. Though we cannot assume there really are forces, monads and substances, these concepts still have a regulative rather than constitutive worth, a practical instead of theoretical value. The *Metaphysik* ends with the ringing declaration: "...the beginning of metaphysics is not in itself but in ethics" (329; §67). That sentence was a blunt rebuttal of the Herbartians, who saw a sharp separation of metaphysics and ethics as the beginning of wisdom.

Reading Lotze's *Metaphysik* is hard work. Its clumsy and involuted prose, its relentless dissection of subtle abstractions, its technical vocabulary and lack of examples, tire the reader and diminish his or her patience. Lotze leaves the hapless reader little clue about where he is going and why, little explanation of what he intends to say, still less why one should bother. Yet the patient reader reaps his reward, slowly but surely. The more one sifts carefully through Lotze's youthful *chef-d'œuvre* the more one becomes dumbstruck by the general drift of the argument. Gradually but inevitably, the reader sees a horrifying specter appear before him: nihilism. "Nihilism" in the straightforward classical sense: doubt about the existence of anything.<sup>4</sup> It is as if Lotze thinks we have no right to believe in the reality of anything, as if all that exists were illusion. The more the reader follows Lotze's criticisms of traditional metaphysics, the less reason he has to believe in any of its ultimate realities. Virtually every major concept of traditional metaphysics is ground to dust. The absolute, substance, monads, the infinite, cause, force and matter, even space and time—all are exposed as hypostases, as reifications of forms of speech. The same radical critique is directed against our common sense beliefs, so that it turns out that there is no reason to believe in the existence of even ordinary objects. So, in sum, it seems as if all reality dissolves into nothingness, as if nothing exists beyond mere appearances, which reveal no deeper reality beyond themselves, so that they are appearances of nothingness. These appearances exist, of

<sup>4</sup> I have made the case for this definition in my *The Fate of Reason* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1987), 81–83.

course, but only fleetingly, only for the present moment, lacking all past and future. We are warned against searching for deeper reality lying behind them, and we are advised that it is a mistake to think that some forms of existence are more real than others. Nihilism had been presented by Jacobi as the ultimate result of all speculation in his famous 1799 *Brief an Fichte*;<sup>5</sup> and it was a theme pointedly reinstated by Herbart in his 1828 *Allgemeine Metaphysik*, where it serves as a nasty reminder of the ultimate price of idealism.<sup>6</sup> Remarkably, Lotze's entire argument seemed to vindicate Jacobi, hardly the result to be desired by someone intent on saving the idealist tradition.

Yet Lotze takes his reader to the abyss only to pull him back and teach him a lesson. The exercise in metaphysical brinkmanship is designed to show the reader that the only salvation from nihilism, the only way forward in metaphysics, lies in ethics. Though we cannot know reality in itself, though we cannot demonstrate the existence of anything, we still know enough for the purposes of life, and we still ought to believe in the reality of things to achieve our moral ends. While the traditional concepts of metaphysics have no constitutive validity, while they give us no reason to believe in the existence of any ultimate reality, they still have a great practical value, a regulative validity as useful fictions.<sup>7</sup> Lotze's revolution in metaphysics would lie here, in giving ethical value to our belief in the ultimate reality of things. Metaphysics would thus cure the very wound it inflicted.<sup>8</sup> It would vindicate itself if it could restore through practical means the belief in reality that it had undermined by theoretical means.

Like Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen*, Lotze's *Metaphysik* begins with an account of the purpose of philosophy, an appropriate, indeed necessary, starting point for his age when the very identity of philosophy was in flux. It is striking that Lotze defines the purpose of philosophy in essentially *epistemological* terms, i.e., as the examination of "the basic presuppositions of enquiry" (19; §7). This is a clear reaction against Hegel's mature system, which began with metaphysics, with knowledge of the absolute.<sup>9</sup> Implicitly, though deliberately and decisively, Lotze was taking philosophy back to Kant, who had made the critique of knowledge the starting point of philosophy.<sup>10</sup> Hence the terms Lotze uses in defining philosophy are Kantian. The task of philosophy, he writes, is to determine "the relationship between the given and the non-given in all the sciences" (3–5; §2). What is given is the *content* of sensation, whatever we

<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Jacobi an Fichte, Werke*, eds. Friedrich Roth and Friedrich Köppen (Leipzig: Fleischer, 1816), III, 1–57.

<sup>6</sup> See Johann Friedrich Herbart, *Allgemeine Metaphysik*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Karl Kehrbach (Langensalza: Hermann Beyer & Söhne, 1887), VIII, 200, §303. Herbart refers to the second part of Fichte's *Bestimmung des Menschen*, which discusses the problem of nihilism as invoked by Jacobi.

<sup>7</sup> See Herbart's "Ontologie", *Kleine Schriften*, I, 135–137.

<sup>8</sup> The motif appears in Weiße, *Grundzüge der Metaphysik*, 65.

<sup>9</sup> Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, §1, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), VIII, 41.

<sup>10</sup> Lotze's role as a founder of neo-Kantianism has been fully recognized in Thomas Willey, *Back to Kant: The Revival of Kantianism in German Social and Historical Thought* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978), 40–57. Willey makes too little, however, of Lotze's critique of Kant and his insistence on metaphysics.



know through the senses; the non-given consists in the *form* of experience, the connections between content, which are constructions the mind creates to understand it (19; §7). The problem for the philosopher is then to determine the relationship between the content and form of experience, i.e., between the data of sensation and the constructions by which we understand it. Philosophy should ascertain the standards of knowledge that we use in assessing the relationship between the given and non-given (5; §2). These standards are implicit in our natural ways of thinking, and it is the business of philosophy to bring them to self-consciousness and to systematize them (5; §2).

It is important to see, however, that Lotze's re-orientation of philosophy around epistemology did not imply any depreciation of metaphysics. The central task of his book is indeed to rehabilitate metaphysics. We have already seen how Lotze, in his review of Stark, stressed the necessity of metaphysics; that emphasis now returns in force in his *Metaphysik*. Lotze insists that epistemology and metaphysics are indeed inseparable, since a theory of knowledge involves a theory of being. Epistemology cannot dispense with metaphysics for the simple reason that how we conceive of the object of knowledge involves some account of the object itself (279; §58). The common notion that before attempting to know anything we should first investigate the conditions and limits of knowledge is naive, he argues, because even the attempt to know these conditions and limits involves a claim to knowledge, and moreover one that involves a metaphysics (279; §58). As Lotze put it: "...the critique of reason is not a question preceding metaphysics but one immanent within it" (280; §58).

Though intent on rehabilitating metaphysics, Lotze is also keenly aware of the need to provide it with a critical foundation. There could be no going back to the bad old days and ways of speculative *Naturphilosophie* or to Hegel's dialectic. Hence Lotze makes the task of metaphysics continuous with epistemology: its business is to reflect on some basic presuppositions of enquiry, and more specifically those involved in our thinking about being (19–20; §7). He conceives his metaphysics along the lines of a Kantian ontology, i.e., a system of the most fundamental concepts about things-in-general. Weiße had a similar conception of metaphysics,<sup>11</sup> and to this extent Lotze follows his teacher.

One of the major—and all too Kantian—themes of *Metaphysik* is its critique of hypostasis.<sup>12</sup> No less than Kant, Lotze sees hypostasis as the major fallacy of traditional metaphysics; only what Kant once saw in Leibniz and Wolff he now finds in Herbart and Hegel. Hypostasis takes place for Lotze whenever we assume that an abstract concept refers to a special substance or entity. The concept of matter, for example, is hypostasized if we assume that it is a substrate in which forces inhere; and the concept

<sup>11</sup> Weiße, *Grundzüge der Metaphysik*, 37, 43, 52.

<sup>12</sup> Lotze was a great admirer of the "Amphibolien" chapter of the first *Kritik*, where Kant's critique of hypostasis is its most trenchant. Stumpf, "Zum Gedächtnis Lotzes", *Kant-Studien* 22 (1918) 14, tells us how Lotze recommended this section of the *Kritik* to him as a therapy against conceptual confusion.

of force is hypostasized if we suppose that it is a cause that somehow resides in a thing. To remove hypostasis, Lotze recommends translating a statement about an apparent entity into one about a function or law. It is striking that he thinks the model for such translations lies in the practices of the natural sciences. If we define concepts like matter and power according to modern physics and chemistry, he argues, we see that they do not refer to peculiar substances or powers but really only to constant ways in which things interact with one another.

Besides Kant, there is another major thinker who plays a decisive role in Lotze's early metaphysics, though more in a negative sense: Hegel. Lotze constantly takes issue with Hegel, who casts a heavy shadow over all his reflections. This lingering presence has much to do with Weiße, who, in his 1835 *Grundzüge der Metaphysik*, continued to use, and express his faith in, the Hegelian method.<sup>13</sup> So, not surprisingly, the intended but implicit target of Lotze's critique of Hegel is his former teacher. It is noteworthy, however, that Lotze himself sometimes uses the dialectic, viz., he argues that two concepts presuppose yet contradict one another, so that there is need to find a new higher concept uniting the two. Even his arrangement of topics follows Hegel's logic, viz., he begins with being, moves to determinate being, and finally essence. Still, it would be a mistake to make too much of these lingering traces of Hegelianism, as if Lotze were advancing a reformed dialectic.<sup>14</sup> Lotze's Hegelian arrangement of topics is best seen as an expository device to retrace Hegel's steps and to expose the weaknesses of his reasoning. On no account did Lotze endorse Hegel's method, which he still believed to be mistaken in principle. The idea that there should be a single method to solve all basic problems, he complains, is like the idea of following a single principle in all occasions of life. Sometimes, we simply have to follow our noses in investigating each particular problem, and we must renounce faith in a single methodology whose rules apply infallibly to anything (17; §6). What the philosopher should seek, he advises, is not a unity of method but a unity of worldview (16; §6). In rejecting faith in an ideal method for philosophy Lotze had laid down one of the cornerstones of his mature thought.<sup>15</sup>

There were four great critics of Hegel in the early 1840s: Schelling, Feuerbach, Trendelenburg and, last but not least, Lotze. Lotze's claim to fame in this respect comes from his *Metaphysik*. We find in his critique of Hegel in the *Metaphysik* the same devotion to logical precision and detail that lay in Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen*. Lotze tells us that his task is to expose "that false speculative lustre that surrounds Hegel's method" (34; §11). And, sure enough, he quickly proceeds to tear Hegel apart. The fascinating but mystifying dialectic of being and nothingness in the beginning of Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik*, which Weiße had recently reinstated,<sup>16</sup> comes in

<sup>13</sup> See Weiße, *Grundzüge der Metaphysik*, xi, 68, 72, 89, 97.

<sup>14</sup> Pace Bamberger, *Entstehung der Wertproblem*, 50–51.

<sup>15</sup> See "Philosophy in the Last Forty Years", *Kleine Schriften*, III/2, 473–479.

<sup>16</sup> Weiße, *Grundzüge der Metaphysik*, 117–119, 121–122.

for some sharp scrutiny. Being taken on its own, emptied of all determination, Lotze explains, is nothing more than the form of objectivity, i.e., whatever can be posited or an object of thought (44; §12). It is “the mere objectivity of being posited”, of something that we talk about or think of. We cannot say that existence is really one and the same as being in this very general sense, the sense of whatever is posited (*Gesetzsein*), because we can also talk or think about something that does not exist (45; §13). Existence and non-existence are equally forms of being in this broad sense insofar as we can posit both as objects of thought and so talk about them. Now what Hegel was getting at, though through a glass darkly, with all his talk of the identity of being and nothingness is that we can talk about non-existence as much as existence, that, as mere objects of thinking they are on a par and there is no difference between them (47; §13). However, this does not mean that being and nothingness are really the same in the paradoxical sense that Hegel wants, as if the realm of existence were one and the same as the realm of non-existence. Being and nothingness in this sense are indeed opposed to one another—being is precisely *not* non-being or nothingness—and it is only in virtue of their opposition to one another that they have any meaning at all (47; §13). Being is not nothingness, nothingness is not being, and never does one melt into another.

The chief target of Lotze’s critique is the same as Trendelenburg’s: Hegel’s rationalism, especially his attempt to construct an entire system of philosophy through dialectic or the logic of pure thinking alone. The great problem for such a rationalism Lotze finds in that “broad ugly ditch” between reason and experience, more specifically, the gap between the general concepts of Hegel’s logic and the multitude of the specific laws of nature. There cannot be any transition from such concepts to these laws, Lotze argues, because these principles are true of being as such and are therefore too abstract and too general to determine which particular laws or facts instantiate them in the existing world. Kant had the right idea, he thinks, in trying to bridge the gap between these realms through the schematism of the forms of intuition (139–142, 145; §§35, 37). Hegel, however, is equivocal about the proper relationship between logic and nature (122–4; §§32–33). Sometimes he attempts to derive the laws of nature from his logic, imposing upon them the rigid structure of his dialectic; but at other times he complains about the “the weakness of nature” (*die Ohnmacht der Natur*), as if the facts of experience were an impertinent irrelevance. *Contra* Hegel, Lotze affirms an element of radical contingency in nature (125; §33). There is such contingency, he argues, because some facts in nature or history are simply unnecessary to the realization of the idea, or they are even contrary to it (127; §33). In general, Lotze thinks that it is a mistake for metaphysics to regard one form of being as more essential and basic than another, as if all the contingent and particular facts of nature were only a penumbra around a more eminent translucent being (125; §33).

The problems of Hegel’s rationalism are especially apparent, Lotze believes, in his hypostases of basic concepts. It is crucial to Hegel’s rationalism that the structure of being be one and the same as the structure of thought. But Hegel sees an identity

here, Lotze argues, only in virtue of hypostasis, by treating the structure of our concepts as if it were that of things themselves. Rather than forms of being in general, Hegel's concepts are by themselves only general words, names for the general presuppositions of our thinking. These concepts give us no knowledge by themselves but only in virtue of their application (36; §11). Hegel's tendency to reify concepts is especially apparent in his dialectic, Lotze maintains, because he writes of these concepts as if they have a meaning and force of their own, as if the content of one drives us necessarily to another. But, Lotze insists, no concept by itself has a meaning on its own; rather, its meaning depends on the specific context in which we place it and the premises that we put behind it (37; §11). Just as one point has no direction on its own but can be the start of many different directions, so one concept contains no meaning on its own but is simply the possibility of many different meanings depending on its context.

Hegel's most serious hypostasis, in Lotze's view, is the concept of the absolute itself (90; §25). Hegel conceives of the absolute as the single universal substance, the ground, reason or source of all finite things. Like Spinoza, he understands it as self-subsistent substance, i.e., that which has an independent essence and existence. It is necessary to ask, however, in what its essence consists? We soon find that we cannot identify it except through its many properties, except through the many modes that constitute its appearance or manifestation. By itself the concept of the absolute is only that empty propertyless substratum, that "*je ne sais quoi*" which supports its properties or modes. If we insist that it is more than that, that it is the *source* or *ground* of all its modes or appearances, all this really means is that it is the *system of laws* governing them. So, Lotze asks, what is this substance other than the system of laws governing the totality of appearances? The essence or nature of substance is really nothing more than the whole of appearances, and more specifically those appearances appearing as substance (87, 88; §25). There is no reality to substance other than that made by the appearances themselves. As long as we conceive of substance as a self-subsisting being, as something over and above these appearances, we hypostasize it. We should not attempt to get behind appearances or phenomena to grasp their substance or idea because there is really nothing more to substance than these appearances or phenomena themselves, which by themselves give rise to the appearance of substance. They constitute the realm of appearances not because they are manifestations of a deeper reality but only because they create the appearance of a deeper reality. Ultimately, Lotze concludes: "There is no unmoving essence of being as its final support, or substance in itself..." (92; §26). He recommends instead the Heraclitean view that "every idea of an unmoving substantiality is empty and mistaken", and that all that exists is in movement or becoming (92; §26).

Along with Kant and Hegel, there is a third philosopher lurking in the background of Lotze's early metaphysics: Herbart.<sup>17</sup> It was Herbart whom Lotze saw as the chief

<sup>17</sup> I cannot accept Misch's view, "Einleitung", xiii, that Lotze was deeply influenced by Herbart. The affinities Misch finds are too abstract and general to amount to a case for influence. Lotze himself protested strongly against those who called him Herbartian; see his *Streitschriften* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1857), 8. We should take Lotze at his word here. Lotze first studied Herbart intensively during the Zittau interlude, and the critical reaction came very quickly. See Lotze an Ernst Friedrich Apelt, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 111–112.

antagonist of the idealist tradition, and indeed as the main obstacle to reinstating his romantic worldview. In his *Allgemeine Metaphysik* Herbart had sketched a mechanistic metaphysics whose main purpose was to surpass and replace the idealism of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. Herbart took issue with the idealist tradition on two grounds. First, he defended a form of realism, according to which the specific forms of experience, i.e., the relations between particular objects, is given, even though the content of sensation is a product of physiology.<sup>18</sup> In stressing the givenness of these forms or relations Herbart had seized upon one of the classical difficulties of idealism: its inability to explain or derive the particular laws and facts of experience from the general a priori forms of thought. Herbart's realism, however, is heavily qualified. He affirmed a form of transcendental idealism of his own, according to which the immediate objects of awareness are representations, and according to which there are things-in-themselves, i.e., simple independent substances, unknowable in their intrinsic properties, though their relations to one another appear to us in experience.<sup>19</sup> Second, Herbart insisted on the sharpest separation between the normative and natural, the realm of practice and theory, value and fact.<sup>20</sup> These realms had been confused by the idealists, he argued, who had proclaimed the unity of reason, the identity of practical and theoretical reason. This confusion is apparent in two ways: when Fichte, with his moral postulates, inferred how the world is from how it ought to be; and when Schelling and Hegel rehabilitated teleology, which is the idea that nature conforms to ends or purposes.<sup>21</sup> Herbart conceived his own metaphysics as essentially a form of natural philosophy, one that abolished all teleology and relegated ethics to a completely distinct domain, that of value theory or aesthetics.

In his *Metaphysik* Lotze took up both Herbart's challenges to the idealist tradition. His strategy in response to them is to argue that Herbart's system can be consistent and complete only by incorporating those very idealist themes he so ardently opposed.<sup>22</sup> The chief stumbling block of Herbart's ontology, Lotze believed, is that it cannot explain the basic facts of experience, the very facts it insists should be both the beginning and end of metaphysics. Among these facts are the appearance of things in space and time, and the sheer diversity of things, i.e., the multitude of different things with their different qualities. Herbart's substances are useless, however, to explain such basic facts. Since they are simple, they are unextended, so that they cannot explain the appearance of space. And since they are eternal, they also cannot explain the facts of change. To deal with this difficulty Herbart invokes a mathematical analogy, his idea

<sup>18</sup> Herbart, *Allgemeine Metaphysik, Sämtliche Werke*, VIII, 19–20, 233–244; §§, 169, 327–329

<sup>19</sup> Herbart, *Allgemeine Metaphysik, Sämtliche Werke*, VIII, 238; §328. On Herbart's defense of the idealist view that the immediate objects of experience are representations, see his *Ueber meinen Streit mit der Modephilosophie dieser Zeit* (Königsberg: Unzer 1814), in *Werke*, III, 325.

<sup>20</sup> Herbart, *Allgemeine Metaphysik, Sämtliche Werke*, VII, 167, 228–229; §§96, 120

<sup>21</sup> Herbart, *Allgemeine Metaphysik, Sämtliche Werke*, VII, 66–80, 167; §§38, "Erste Anmerkung", 96.

<sup>22</sup> Lotze had hit upon this strategy early. See his letter to Ernst Friedrich Apelt, June 17, 1840, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 111–112.

of “accidental aspects”,<sup>23</sup> according to which diversity arises from simple substances in the same way that a mathematical equation gives different results according to the different terms that instantiate it. The substance would be the equation, the different results the facts of experience. Lotze objects, however, that this does not really solve the problem: for whence come the different terms that give these different results? Not from the substances themselves if they are simple. Why indeed apply an equation to them, because this involves the concept of a relation, which is alien to the concept of an independent simple substance? Since the concept of a substance cannot explain experience, it proves to be a useless idea, another unnecessary hypostasis. All that really exists are phenomena and their relations, and what explains them is the laws of their succession and co-existence. Since these laws alone are sufficient to explain the permanence and coherence involved in the realm of appearance, it is not necessary to postulate a substance lying underneath them. In thus eliminating Herbart’s substances, and in equating reality with the laws of appearance, Lotze believed that he had vindicated the mathematical conception of nature (246; §54). Despite his alleged naturalism, Herbart’s system undermined rather than supported natural science; for his simple substances are unquantifiable, and therefore preclude a mathematical treatment of reality itself.

Undermining Herbart’s realism was only the first part of Lotze’s vindication of idealism. Having eliminated Herbart’s substances and replaced them with laws, it was only a short step to the second part: the rehabilitation of teleology. Lotze now contends that the realm of laws should be not only mathematical and mechanical but also teleological or purposive. We cannot explain all reality mechanically, he argues, because all mechanical explanation is hypothetical—it assumes that “if X, then Y”—so that it cannot explain the existence of X, the initial conditions (253; §55). If we treat all of nature as a mechanism, we still have to explain why that mechanism arose in the first place; we have to assume, in other words, that it has a purpose or meaning. Lotze thinks that the ultimate scientific ideal is an organic system, one where each part plays a necessary role in the whole and where all parts form a unity; the requirement of systematicity presupposes, however, that the totality of things are organized according to ideas, which serve as their meaning and purpose (151, 155, 263; §§39, 40, 57).

These were, of course, standard idealist arguments, contentions which could be easily found in Schelling and Hegel. The crucial question in understanding Lotze’s use of them, however, is whether he wants to ascribe strictly regulative significance to them. Lotze seems to swither on this crucial point. On the one hand, he reproaches traditional *Naturphilosophie* for hypostasizing the concept of a purpose, which, he says, should be treated simply as an “ought” (131; §34); and he maintains that the idea, understood as something normative, should be treated not as a particular kind of cause or mechanism but only as a special kind of law that makes mechanism into a means for

<sup>23</sup> Herbart, *Allgemeine Metaphysik, Sämtliche Werke*, VIII, 72–74; §212

its ends (132; §34). On the other hand, however, he does conceive of this kind of law as acting in and through the realm of nature (131; §34); and he insists that we regard the concept of the good as “the true substance of the world” (324; §66). Indeed, we are told in no uncertain terms: “The apodictic status of existence can be granted only to the good.” (324; §66).

It is only in the third and final part of *Metaphysik* that Lotze turns to the epistemological issues behind the foundation of metaphysics. The epistemology that he puts forward here is Kantian in its main arguments and conclusions. We have already seen how Lotze, in his Zittau days, defended the Kantian conception of space as a pure intuition. He now goes even further in this direction. For he now endorses the central thesis of transcendental idealism: that knowledge is limited to appearances. Such is the upshot of Lotze’s analysis of sense perception. Sense qualities are not properties of the object in itself, he argues, because they are the product of how our physiology reacts to the stimuli of the external world (283–284; §58). We cannot know things-in-themselves—objects as they exist apart from and prior to the processes by which we know them—simply because we cannot get outside these processes to compare their results with reality itself (292–293; §60). Lotze also argues that the categories are limited to knowledge of appearances. Since the categories are essentially relational, they cannot provide us with knowledge of the intrinsic properties of things-in-themselves (295, 297; §60). It does not make sense to ask if the categories apply to things-in-themselves because any object we attempt to know will be the product of the categories (292–293; §60).

Although Lotze endorses Kant’s transcendental idealism, he disputes its apparent anti-metaphysical implications. The critique of reason that led to transcendental idealism, he insists, still involves a metaphysics all its own. We cannot escape metaphysics for the simple reason that epistemology inevitably involves some conception of the object of knowledge (279; §58). It is in this context that Lotze declares: “...the critique of reason is a question not preceding metaphysics but one immanent to it.” (280; §58). The immanence of metaphysics has a specific meaning for Lotze: that we should view the relationship between subject and object not outside the world, but as a relationship within it between two kinds of objects or events; in other words, we should see knowledge itself in the context of the cosmos as a whole (280; §58). If we treat our awareness of things as one kind of relation between them, we have no reason to complain about the inadequacy of our knowledge, because all things in general reveal only some aspects of themselves, those involved in their relations to one another (282; §58). Everything that happens within the world is the result of an interaction, an interchange between things, where each thing changes, and is changed by, the other. As the product of such an interaction, knowledge is as much the result of the activity of the object as the subject, so that whatever the constitution of the subject, it will know the object only as it appears (297; §60). Because knowledge is fundamentally relational, it is a mistake to regard it as either a passive mirroring of things or as the product of spontaneous subjective activity alone. We know things insofar as we make



them conform to our constitution, and that is to know them at least insofar as they are relative to us (297; §60). In knowing the appearances of things, then, we do know something about them after all, namely, how they appear in relation to beings such as ourselves (307; §63).

Throughout his analysis of knowledge, Lotze presupposes the existence of the thing-in-itself, that unknowable objective correlative that is one cause of the process of knowledge. This presupposition therefore serves as a brake and limit on his nihilism theme. There are passages, however, where Lotze seems to regard the thing-in-itself as little more than a fiction, as one more hypostasis of our ways of thinking about the world. The reality in itself we imagine corresponding to our representations, he argues, is really only the product of them (293, 297; §60). Yet the existence of the thing-in-itself remains a crucial presupposition, a stubborn residuum, of Lotze's entire analysis. It is that object that exists prior to the process of knowing, that stimulates the process, and that remains forever an appearance relative to the subject, what Lotze at one point calls "an unknown being, unseen by any subjectivity" (314; §64).

Though Lotze insists that we should not complain about the limits of our knowledge, he also preaches that we must abandon stronger claims for its objectivity. We have to realize that we know things only as they appear to us, as they conform to our conditions of knowing them, so that it is impossible to know things-in-themselves. All that is left for us, he admits, is "to save the dignity of our own subjectivity" (317; §65). Although we cannot claim that our concepts conform to reality in itself, we can at least claim that they conform to the tasks we set for them (293; §60). The basis for the deduction of the categories is that they are indispensable operating assumptions, necessary means for the realization of our ends (323; §66): "The forms of cognition will be true as soon as they serve what ought to be" (319; §65). Ultimately, all that matters about the world is that it fulfills our purposes. Whether it consists in one kind of being rather than another is indifferent if it does not affect how we achieve our ends (324; §66).

It is only in his closing paragraph that Lotze finally gives a name to his new metaphysics. He calls it "*teleological idealism*" (329; §67). It is "idealism" because it limits our knowledge of the world down to appearances, to how things appear to our consciousness, to our forms of intuiting and thinking about the world. It is "teleological" in at least two senses. First, in a pragmatic sense, because it justifies our basic categories, and our belief in the reality of things, by appealing to the purposes they help us to achieve (293, 323; §§60, 66). Second, in a metaphysical sense, because it connects the world of appearances with the world of value—the normative and natural—through the concept of a purpose (326–327; §66). While the pragmatic sense refers to our human ends, the metaphysical sense points to the end of the cosmos itself. Both of these senses come together when Lotze writes that the content or meaning of the world of appearances consists not in their reference to any higher reality—whether monads, substance or the absolute—but in their subservience to values, what Lotze more simply calls "the good". All that ultimately matters about the world—whatever



it might be—is that it realizes the highest ends (324; §66). It is in both these senses that Lotze announces his famous conclusion: “...the beginning of metaphysics is not in itself but in ethics” (329; §67).<sup>24</sup>

Though Lotze himself chooses the term “teleological idealism” to describe his philosophy, we shall soon see that he eventually discards it. For Lotze, it expressed his basic allegiance to the idealist tradition against Herbart’s metaphysics; but he always had an ambivalent relationship to that tradition, which he believed was seriously flawed in several respects. Idealism was to be preserved, to be sure, but it also had to be surpassed and improved. We shall see later how Lotze’s reflections on the shortcomings of idealism led him to his more characteristic doctrine of “spiritualism”.<sup>25</sup>

## 2. Early Pathology

By the autumn of 1839 Lotze had habilitated in the faculty of medicine at Leipzig. This gave him the right to hold lectures there, though only as an “extraordinary” (i.e., unsalaried) professor. By May 1840 he had also habilitated in philosophy. For the habilitation in philosophy Lotze had to write a dissertation and take part in a public disputation. The dissertation, *De summa continuorum*, whose contents are entirely technical, concerned the method of treating infinite quantities in mathematics.<sup>26</sup> Of greater philosophical interest are the disputation theses: “I: The Euclidean method is not an adequate explanation for the objects of geometry. II. The concept of force in physics should be kept free from speculative assumptions about the nature of things. III. There is no progression from lower to higher in human affairs; rather, the difference between cultures, and the obstacles they face, are a constant quantity throughout the ages. IV. Aesthetics should be treated as a natural science.”<sup>27</sup> Since the aim of these theses was only to provide material for disputation, none of them should be treated as a final statement of Lotze’s convictions.<sup>28</sup>

By May 1840, Lotze had embarked on his dual career. With it came a double-work load, the expectation that he would lecture not only in medicine but also philosophy. The reason for assuming such a burden was partly strategic: since opportunities in philosophy were few and far between, medicine served as a safety net. So, from 1839

<sup>24</sup> Lotze says little to explain the meaning of this dictum, as many students of his thought have complained. It has been the subject of some commentary. See Vida Moore, *The Ethical Aspect of Lotze’s Metaphysics* (New York: Macmillan, 1901); and George Santayana, “Lotze’s Moral Idealism” *Mind* 15 (1890), 191–212.

<sup>25</sup> See Part II, chapter 5, section 2 and chapter 6, section 4 below.

<sup>26</sup> *De summis continuorum* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1840). Reprinted in *Kleine Schriften*, I, 62–86. On the context of the habilitation thesis, see Pester, *Lotze*, 61–64.

<sup>27</sup> I translate rather freely from the Latin: “I. *Methodo Euclidea non parari adequatam rerum geometricarum explicationem*. II. *Tollendum esse omnem virium notionem ex rerum naturae consideratione speculativa*. III. *Nullam esse in rebus a genere humano aut gestis aut gerendis progressionem a minori ad majus, sed differentiam inter culturam atque culturae obstacula per omnia tempora magnitudinem esse constantem*. IV. *Aesthetica doctrinam recensendam esse inter disciplinas physicas*.” The theses were first published by Rehnisch, “Zur Biographie Hermann Lotze’s”, 97.

<sup>28</sup> *Pace* Pester, *Lotze*, 63–64, who sees them as a concise statement of Lotze’s entire philosophical program.

to 1844, his second Leipzig period, Lotze would toil in both fields, giving lectures in physiology as well as philosophy. He made, however, a philosophical virtue out of this practical necessity. Such a dual career was the foundation for his guiding intellectual ambition, which was to establish a *philosophical* medicine, i.e., one that would treat the human being as part of the cosmos in general. Though medical studies might be dry and drab, they still provided the necessary empirical content and support for such a project.

Following his dual obligations, Lotze announced, beginning in the Winter Semester of 1839–40, lectures in both medicine and philosophy.<sup>29</sup> Although from 1839 to 1844 he advertised several lectures in philosophy, viz., on logic, metaphysics and history of philosophy, he often found too few students willing to take them, and so had to fall back on medical topics. The few philosophical lectures he did give were on general and introductory themes, viz., “Logik und Encyclopädie der Philosophie”, or they were designed for students in the medical faculty, viz., “Encyclopädischer Cursus der Philosophie für Mediciner”. Yet, even in the medical lectures, Lotze would introduce philosophical themes. The value of a philosophical foundation in physiology, already a main theme of the ‘Stark’ review, became a guiding force behind all his lectures. Contrary to the narrow empiricist bias of the medical faculty in Leipzig, Lotze was intent on keeping alive the tradition of *Naturphilosophie* in medicine, and he would now use the podium for that agenda. It was indeed telling that his first philosophical lecture was on *Naturphilosophie*.

In the early 1840s Lotze published as much in medicine as philosophy. His first major work in philosophy, the *Metaphysik*, was quickly followed by his first major work in medicine, his *Allgemeine Pathologie und Therapie*, which appeared in 1842.<sup>30</sup> While the former work discussed the macrocosm, the world in general, the latter proceeded to treat the microcosm, the human being in particular. The main subject of the *Allgemeine Pathologie* is one special aspect of the human microcosm, namely, the sources of health and disease. True to his plans for a philosophical medicine, Lotze always kept this topic in a broader perspective. The introduction discusses the philosophical problems of biology, and later sections show how issues in pathology depend on the solution to deeper metaphysical problems. It was just this mixture of the philosophical and medical, we shall soon see, that got Lotze into trouble with the medical faculty.<sup>31</sup> This was the very hallmark of the *Naturphilosophie* they so loved to hate. Yet Lotze, philosopher to the bone, would have replied: there is no avoiding metaphysical issues, and philosophical principle should guide empirical research rather than derive from it.

<sup>29</sup> For a full list of his lectures, both announced and given, see Rehnisch, “Zur Biographie”, 105–106.

<sup>30</sup> *Allgemeine Pathologie und Therapie als mechanische Naturwissenschaft* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1842). A second improved edition appeared in 1848. All references in parentheses above are to the first edition.

<sup>31</sup> See below, Part II, chapter 3, section 4.

Taken at its face value, the *Allgemeine Pathologie* is the work of a complete mechanist, a resolute follower of the physicalist program.<sup>32</sup> The subtitle of the work promises to treat pathology “as a mechanical natural science” (*als mechanische Naturwissenschaft*); and its program is indeed explicitly and emphatically mechanical. Thus in his preface Lotze prides himself with one aspect of his work: “the execution of a strict mechanical view” (vii). The reason that pathology has made so little progress hitherto, he tells us in the introduction, is because of the persistent vitalist belief that there is a fundamental difference in kind between the organic and inorganic worlds (5). Lotze reassures us, however, that, though there is indeed a great difference between organic and inorganic phenomena, they still follow the same general laws and consist in the same basic powers; the difference between them is solely due to the different organization of their parts, the ways or means by which these powers are realized (7–8). Hence Lotze makes it his general principle: “*Everything organic is a determinate form of the unification of the mechanical*” (9; his emphasis).

Lotze’s pathological theory duly follows these mechanist guidelines. His approach to disease is mechanical in the sense that it gives priority to the parts of an organism rather than to the organism as a whole. The source of disease and health is found in the composition or balance of the parts in the body. A disease arises when, due to some disturbance, the balance of material components changes, and the organism does not have a sufficient power to resist this disturbance and to reassert its composition. If, for example, the normal balance consists in ‘ $1a+2b+3c$ ’, and if a disturbance decreases component  $a$  to half of its former amount without components  $b$  or  $c$  being reduced proportionally, the result is a disease (25–26). The way to cure an organism is to restore the proper balance of the parts, viz., to add what has been lost, or to lose what has been added, to separate the united and to unite the separated (47). The effect of medicine upon the body is also discussed according to mechanical and chemical principles (50). While Lotze does use the concept of a living force (*Lebenskraft*), he warns against its “mystical” vitalistic meaning and defines it purely physically. This power does not refer to any *sui generis* living force but simply to the totality of physical forces within a body, their power to produce work or definite effects under certain conditions (20). Such living force can be measured precisely and quantified strictly according to the amount of effect it produces.

Although Lotze’s avowed program is mechanical, it would be a mistake to see the *Allgemeine Pathologie* as a physicalist work. Lotze so qualifies his mechanical principles that they are given a very limited application or validity. The strictures against mechanism in the *Metaphysik* reappear in the *Allgemeine Pathologie*, where Lotze again argues that nomological explanation, whether in the physics or physiology, cannot explain the origin of life or matter (6). He now puts the point as follows: All nomological explanation is limited because it is hypothetical, i.e., it explains events by subordinating

<sup>32</sup> Thus Merz classifies Lotze along with Du Bois-Reymond as a leading representative of “a purely mechanical explanation of life”. See *A History*, II, 401.

them under propositions of the form “If P, R, and S, then Q”. Although such propositions do explain why Q must occur, they do so only because they assume P, R and S as given; but they cannot explain why P, R and S occur in the first place, or why just they come together to produce Q. All nomological explanation therefore presupposes the existence of certain initial conditions, which it has to take as given. It is precisely here, Lotze suggests, that nomological explanation has to be complemented with ideal or teleological explanation. Just as a preliminary and provisional point, he reminds his reader that all phenomena are explicable not only with respect to general laws but also with respect to their “meaning” (*Sinn*), which consists in the ideas (*Ideen*) governing them (12). It is only if we assume such ideas that we can explain the origin and organization of life in the first place, i.e., the reason why factors P, R, and S come together to produce Q (12–13, 57–58). Applying a political metaphor, Lotze likens the distinction between mechanical and ideal explanation to that between *executive* and *legislative* power (12–13). Mechanical principles are executive because they explain the means by which ideas are realized, whereas ideal explanation is legislative because it lays down ends but does not postulate active causes or powers.

Lotze so qualifies his mechanism in the course of his exposition that the crucial question is whether he is a *consistent* mechanist, let alone a *complete* one. We learn in section §10 that, once the existence and structure of the *inorganic* world has been created, everything within it follows strict mechanical laws. However, the same is not the case for the *organic* world, because the actions of living beings are constantly determined “in every moment” by the ideal order, which obeys completely distinct laws from those of the natural world (58). We then need to ask: How does the ideal world act upon the natural world? If events in the organic world constantly depend on the ideal order, which is different in kind from the physical one, then mechanism cannot provide a *complete* account of the organic world after all. Although a mechanical account will be *necessary*, because it alone explains how ideals are realized or manifested in the physical world, it cannot be *sufficient*, because it cannot account for the pervasive influence of the ideal. So it is not simply that mechanism cannot explain the *origin* of the organic world, as Lotze said in his introduction, but that it also cannot explain *events within* it. Even for ordinary events, there will be need for two kinds or forms of explanation, one ideal and the other mechanical.

To deal with this difficulty, Lotze invokes an old metaphysical doctrine, a relic of seventeenth-century Cartesianism: “occasionalism” (58).<sup>33</sup> This is the first appearance of this doctrine in Lotze, who will later make much more use of it, though he will give it different meanings. According to his present version of this doctrine, the ideal and real, the mental and physical, worlds co-vary but do *not* interact with one another

<sup>33</sup> The term is misleading. Unlike Malebranche, who is usually taken to be the early modern exemplar of occasionalism, Lotze does attribute causal efficacy to finite things, and indeed to both mind and the body; its just that mental and physical causal chains do not interact. Their parallelism is more akin to Leibniz’s pre-established harmony.

(58–59).<sup>34</sup> The mental and the physical each follow their own *sui generis* laws, so that physical causes have only physical effects and mental causes only mental effects. Lotze does not deny that physical and mental phenomena constantly co-vary with one another, and that we can establish precise laws about their co-variance, so that, for example, a definite mental sensation (a color) will constantly follow a definite physical stimulus (a light wave of a certain frequency). He does contest, however, that one is the *cause* of the other, or that they *interact* with one another. There is nothing more than a parallelism between the mental and the physical, where each is only “the occasion” for the other. The advantage of this doctrine is clear: it secures the autonomy of the mechanical, the sufficiency of mechanical explanation for the real world, while at the same time allowing for the separate but equal operation of the ideal world. Such was Lotze’s way of having mechanism without materialism. We shall see in later sections how Lotze reformulated and revised this doctrine.<sup>35</sup>

### 3. Polemic against Vitalism

Shortly after his *Allgemeine Pathologie* appeared, Lotze published another piece on physiology, his long article “Leben. Lebenskraft”, which first appeared in 1842 in Rudolph Wagner’s *Handwörterbuch der Physiologie*.<sup>36</sup> This article became famous in its day for its potent critique of vitalism, and it made Lotze’s name as a radical mechanist. It even became an inspiration for later materialists.<sup>37</sup> Anyone who reads the article with care, however, finds nothing to confirm that interpretation. It is as much a critique of the illegitimate pretensions of mechanism as a defense of its legitimate boundaries.<sup>38</sup> Seen from a broad historical perspective, the article is a reaffirmation and reformulation of the principles of the teleomechanical tradition.<sup>39</sup>

Whatever its reception, Lotze’s article was of the first importance for his philosophical development. Here he states for the first time his general views about the explanation of life. Rather than attempting to defend materialism, Lotze attempts to sketch a middle path between it and vitalism. His later distinctions between value and existence, meaning and reality, have their source here, in his early attempt to specify the legitimate provinces of teleological and mechanical explanation in physiology.

<sup>34</sup> Lotze’s argument here works with a tacit equation of the mental and ideal, the physical and real. He sometimes is more careful to distinguish the ideal/real contrast from the mental/physical on the grounds that the idea could be exemplified by the mental or physical. But here I will ignore this complication to follow the general drift of his argument.

<sup>35</sup> See Part II chapter 4, section 3, below.

<sup>36</sup> Lotze, “Leben, Lebenskraft”, in *Handwörterbuch der Physiologie* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1842), ix–lvii. The article was reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1885), I, 139–220. All references in parentheses above are to this more accessible later edition.

<sup>37</sup> See Part II, chapter 4, section 5, below.

<sup>38</sup> This point is overlooked by Misch, “Einleitung”, xiv, who sees this essay as a manifesto for mechanism.

<sup>39</sup> On Lotze’s place in that tradition, see Timothy Lenoir, *The Strategy of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 168–172.

They do not originate in his logic, as is often assumed, still less in his interpretation of Plato.<sup>40</sup>

As befits an encyclopedia article, much of “Leben. Lebenskraft” is an analysis of basic concepts used in biology. With great precision Lotze re-defines such concepts as “reason”, “cause”, “force”, “organism”, and “mechanism”. Here his training as both philosopher and physiologist bore its fruit. While the philosopher in him made for rigor in dealing with abstractions, the physiologist in him allowed him to go into empirical details.

Lotze brings his analytical skills to bear upon one of the oldest questions and controversies in biology, i.e., whether life is *sui generis* or reducible to mechanical processes. The vitalist denies, while the materialist affirms, such reducibility, the terms of which consist in explanation according to mechanical laws. To cut through this dispute, Lotze asks precisely what it means to explain phenomena according to a law. This makes him question one of the guiding assumptions of both parties to the dispute: that explanation consists in reducing one quality or property to another, as if one property (life) should contain either more than, or the same as, the other (matter). As he sees it, the arguments regarding irreducibility confuse two different things: properties with structures, or qualities with relationships. They assume that reduction succeeds or fails depending on whether or not effects have the same properties or qualities as their causes. But in such a strict sense there cannot be any reduction at all. Every effect or result of preceding conditions is something new and irreducible with respect to them, because it is not logically identical with them. The irreducibility of wholes to parts is indeed a principle as true for mechanics as for living organisms (141). All that is involved in any mechanical explanation is that the consequence should be *proportional* to its conditions, that it should share the same *structure*; there is no claim that it should be the same in *quality* or *content* to its conditions (144). This means that we should be able to have a mechanical explanation of living things without necessarily endorsing the claim that they are qualitatively identical with material things. In other words, life can be different from matter even if it is explicable according to the same laws.

Lotze thinks that his conceptual analysis permits him to avoid an old confusion: the conflation of the organic with the living. The distinction between the organic and mechanical was often taken to be parallel with that between the living and non-living, so that living things are organic, non-living things are machines. But Lotze finds this distinction troublesome, not only because of the dualism it introduces between living and non-living things, but also because the distinction between the organic and mechanical cuts across the distinction between the living and non-living. We can use organic concepts in dealing with non-living things, which happens in geology and meteorology; and we can use mechanical concepts to explain living things. To avoid these problems Lotze then redefines the organic and mechanical. The organic is “any

<sup>40</sup> Heidegger assumes this in his *Die Lehre vom Urteil im Psychologismus*, Gesamtausgabe I, 170n2.

combination of physical processes, whether living or non-living....that is present for the sake of some natural purpose" (160). The mechanical, on the other hand, is any combination of physical processes taken on its own, regardless of whether they are means to ends. On this account, then, the distinction between the organic and the mechanical is less between kinds of substance (the living or non-living) than between kinds of structure (teleological or not). If we adopt this distinction, Lotze argues, we can hold that nature forms an organic whole without committing ourselves to the questionable claim that everything in it is alive (160–161). Everything in nature can be part of an organism, a mean to an end, but that need not imply that everything in it is alive, as if the organic structure of nature entails panpsychism. The *Naturphilosophen* have confused these issues: they assume that because nature is an organism everything within it also has to be alive, as if even rocks and stones are some lower forms of life. In rejecting the idea that everything in nature is alive, Lotze was therefore distancing himself from one of the central ideas of his youthful *Tautelmann*. We shall soon see, however, that he later returns to his old faith.<sup>41</sup>

The critical thrust of Lotze's article is directed chiefly against vitalism, especially the concept of a *Lebenskraft*, i.e., a *sui generis* force characteristic of living beings which acts for ends and has the power to direct and change causal processes to realize them.<sup>42</sup> Long the favorite of *Naturphilosophen*, this concept still had much currency in Lotze's day, various versions of which having been recently advanced by such eminent physiologists as Johannes Müller (1801–1858) and Justus Liebig (1803–1873),<sup>43</sup> not to mention one of Lotze's own teachers, E.H. Weber.<sup>44</sup> Its prevalence did not deter Lotze from attempting to expunge it from the field of physiology. He finds the concept, as it is now used in physiology, to be a simple logical confusion, an hypostasis, the reification of an abstract term as if it were a cause on its own. A force is not a quality inherent in an object, as the vitalists assume, but it is simply the general name we give for the law-like interactions between things. In other words, we do not ascribe laws to things because of their inherent forces, but we ascribe forces to them because of their laws (154). While the concept of force has a very definite meaning in physics and chemistry, it has an utterly obscure one in physiology. Force in physics and chemistry means the dispositions things have to act in certain definite ways, and more specifically the law-like interactions between them (155). Whenever we talk about force in these sciences we can specify its actual or possible manner of acting under definite conditions, and indeed in precise and measurable ways. In physiology, however, force denotes a hidden or occult cause or quality somehow inhering in living things. All the

<sup>41</sup> See Part II, chapter 4, section 3, below.

<sup>42</sup> On the various forms of vitalism in this period, see G.J. Goodfield, *The Growth of Scientific Physiology* (London: Hutchinson, 1960), 100–155; and Thomas S. Hall, *Ideas of Life and Matter: Studies in the History of General Physiology 600 B.C. 1900 A.D.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), II, 121–307, esp. 285–287. Lotze seems opposed to all versions of this doctrine as defined by Hall.

<sup>43</sup> On Müller's and Liebig's version of this doctrine, see Hall, *Ideas of Life and Matter*, II, 258–263, 266–272.

<sup>44</sup> On Weber, see Lenoir, *The Strategy of Life*, 121–124.

different phenomena characteristic of life—reproduction, digestion, irritability—are referred to the presence of this single power, as if they all have the same basic cause or source within it. Used in this way, the concept has no real explanatory power at all, Lotze argues. It simply gives a different name to the phenomena to be investigated and does not specify the laws behind them. Lotze accuses several writers of this fallacy, viz., Treviranus and Autenrieth. The worst culprit of all, however, is Schelling, whose concept of a worldsoul is rejected as an explanation *obscuris per obscurum*. Lotze did not hesitate to argue even with his own teacher, E.H. Weber, who had appealed to the concept of vital force to explain organic growth (178). This was a bold, imprudent stroke, one having, as we shall soon see, predictable and punishing consequences for Lotze's career.<sup>45</sup>

Lotze rejects *Lebenskraft* not only for philosophical but also empirical reasons. We simply do not need to postulate *Lebenskraft*, he argues, to explain the presence and persistence of life in organic bodies. It seemed to the vitalists that such a force is necessary to prevent living bodies from decay. Remove the force, they warned, and the body begins to rot. But Lotze complains that there is no empirical evidence at all for the presence of living force in organic bodies. We can explain life perfectly mechanically because of the presence of physical factors that prevent a body from decaying. Just as walking is a constantly prevented falling, so life is a constantly prevented dying; and in each case what sustains activity is simply the presence of certain physical conditions (208). It is often said that a *Lebenskraft* is necessary to explain the peculiar chemical constitution of living organisms, which is “ternary” rather than “binary”.<sup>46</sup> But, Lotze protests, there is no reason to think that the ternary combinations do not follow the same general laws of chemistry as the binary ones (176). Perhaps there is a special imponderable stuff that is crucial for the operation of these ternary laws; but this would not be *Lebenskraft*—an immaterial force that directs matter—but really just another kind of matter obeying chemical laws like all other matter (177).

However compelling and cogent, Lotze's critique of *Lebenskraft* raises a serious question of consistency. Namely, how could Lotze reject *Lebenskraft* but affirm the Leibnizian concept of *vis viva*? We have seen how he embraced that concept in his youthful *Pensées*. But that concept seems to be identical with, or at least a cousin of, *Lebenskraft*. All the criticisms of the one would seem to apply to the other. Lotze's contemporaries were not slow to point out this apparent inconsistency. Lotze nowhere addresses it in “Leben. Lebenskraft”, where the earlier metaphysical fantasy would be forced into the background. But the issue will later return to haunt him, as we shall soon see.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> See Part II chapter 4, section 4 below.

<sup>46</sup> This was the theory of Johannes Müller, who had developed it from theories of Leopold Gmelin. See Hall, *Ideas of Life and Matter*, 259–260. According to Müller, atoms have an intrinsic tendency to form binary compounds; but in living systems they form ternary, or even quaternary, compounds.

<sup>47</sup> See Part II, chapter 4, section 4 below. Lotze discusses the issue in a somewhat different context, with regard to the status of the concept of the soul.



In tune with his critique of vitalism, Lotze insists upon the importance of explaining all of nature in mechanical terms. He affirms the principle of a universal mechanism: that everything in nature is explicable according to laws of cause and effect, where the cause is not a purpose but prior events in time (142). To explain a phenomenon—whether living or non-living—is for him to subsume it under general laws. Anticipating the modern conception of nomological explanation, he demands that an empirical proposition be the conclusion of a syllogism, one where the major premise states some hypothetical relationship between phenomena ('If X, then Y'), where the minor premise states that the conditions do in fact obtain ('There is X at time T1'), and where the conclusion states that the event must occur ('There must be Y at T2') (141). But, just as in the *Allgemeine Pathologie*, Lotze refuses to give mechanism *exclusive* rights in the explanation of life and nature. Teleology also plays for him an important and irreducible role. We cannot eliminate the concept of purpose from physiological explanation, he argues, because it explains the existence of the hypothetical conditions simply assumed in mechanical explanation (148–9).

It is important to see that the affirmation of teleology in "Leben. Lebenskraft" is heavily qualified and decidedly guarded. Lotze warns against regarding it as a kind of causal explanation, as if purposes were causal agents. While a purpose represents the *systematic unity* or *form* of an organism, that does not make it a cause. Such unity or form is what he calls "the idea" behind an organism, i.e., its model or prototype. But the idea of an organism is no more its cause than the equation of a parabola is the cause for the existence of a parabola (171). Just because purposes cannot act on their own, Lotze insists, there has to be some primitive mass or inchoate matter, a germ or seed, that exists inside an organism that serves as the motor or means for its growth. This germ or seed contains the basic structure which, under the right conditions, is repeated and elaborated and the source for the complex structure that follows (172, 177). But this basic structure is not the idea or purpose itself but simply its simulacrum or ectype in the world of appearances. Falling back on the legal analogy in the *Allgemeine Pathologie*, Lotze again likens a purpose to the *legislative* power of nature that provides nature with its prototypes or models; but these models cannot act by themselves but only through efficient or mechanical means, which serve as their executive powers (150). Since they are not material, purposes cannot work on their own but only through the general laws of matter, which are the necessary means of their realization. Thus Lotze stresses that teleology does not *compete with* mechanism, as if it were an alternative form of explanation, but that it *requires* mechanism, because mechanical forces are the sole and necessary *instruments* or *means* through which purposes are realized. This leads him to his "ultimate methodological demand": "that one recognize the legislative force of predetermining ideas of nature, but that these do not have executive power in themselves but only insofar as they are already grounded in given material conditions" (173).

Though carefully formulated, the treatment of teleology in "Leben. Lebenskraft" is not without ambiguity and equivocation. We have seen how Lotze swithered regarding

the regulative/constitutive status of teleology in his *Metaphysik*. That same vacillation returns in his later article. In some passages Lotze is clear that teleological explanation is *not* a form of causal explanation at all, and that it provides only heuristic principles which aid us in providing such explanations (151, 153). In other words, all proper explanation is mechanical; teleology is only a necessary tool in helping us to formulate mechanical laws. It aids enquiry because it determines the range of causal factors that we should investigate in producing a specific result; it indicates what factors might be means to an end, even though it does not tell us *how* these means produce that end. In other passages, however, Lotze seems to recognize teleology as a form of explanation in its own right. The metaphor of a legislative power suggests that purposes still have some kind of constitutive status even if it is not causal. It implies that purposes or ideas lay down the basic limits on nature, the fundamental structure or variables within which causes act. While purposes or ideas are not locatable events, and while they are not even causes, they are still not just regulative fictions that guide enquiry. As regulative principles they still seem to have some objective formal or structural correlate in nature, whose precise ontological status it is difficult to specify.

That Lotze continues to conceive teleology in some kind of explanatory role, that he persists in giving it some kind of constitutive status, becomes apparent when we focus upon his statements about the limits of mechanical explanation. In one striking passage he insists that a complete mechanical explanation of life is a scientific ideal which we should strive to achieve even though we cannot ever attain it (203). Sure enough, this is the language of Kantian regulative ideals, and it suggests that there is no difficulty *in principle* in achieving such an explanation but only one *in practice*. Yet a closer look at the texts belies this suggestion. While Lotze thinks that this ideal can be perhaps achieved for lower organisms, he is skeptical that it will be ever achieved for higher organisms like man. The difficulty now proves to be one not of practice but of principle. For Lotze insists that there are basic conceptual limits to all natural explanation in physiology. We cannot explain life simply from chemical elements mixing in certain proportions under certain environmental conditions. This is because we cannot explain how or why all the elements necessary for life come together to produce such a result in the first place; this still leaves too much to chance alone (164). We can provide a mechanical explanation for life only if we assume that there is a definite seed or germ which interacts with its environment. While we can then explain growth as the result of chemical factors within the seed and its relations to the environment, we still cannot explain the origin of the seed itself. To explain that, there are only two possibilities: that its elements come together by chance, the concourse of atoms, as in the Epicurean view; or that they come together through design in an original act of creation. The answer to this question lies beyond the limits of empirical science, Lotze warns us. Still, on general metaphysical grounds, he finds the second theory more plausible than the first (169). If we uphold the ideal of the systematic unity of nature, that excludes the possibility of things coming together through accident alone.

Whatever its ambiguities, Lotze believed that his distinction between teleology and mechanism, the legislative and executive powers of nature, gave him *one* means of avoiding the extremes of vitalism and materialism. The valid claims of vitalism and materialism could be upheld—and their illegitimate pretensions chastened—if one only accepted that teleology has sole legislative power while mechanism has sole executive power. Though the vitalist is wrong in attributing actual powers to ideas or purposes, he is right to stress the irreducibility and necessity of teleology. While the materialist is right to insist upon mechanism as the sole form of causal agency, he is wrong to assume that mechanism alone could explain everything about life. Above all it was necessary to keep in mind, following Lotze's "ultimate demand", that teleology and mechanism be not competing but complementary forms of explanation. While teleology is necessary to explain the initial conditions presupposed in mechanism, mechanism is necessary to explain how purposes are realized.

Besides his distinction between teleology and mechanism, Lotze had another strategy to resolve the dispute between vitalism and materialism: his distinction between the form and content of explanation (174–5). This distinction means that even if life were entirely explicable according to mechanical laws, it still would not follow that there is no difference between living and non-living things. If living and non-living things were very different in *content*, they could still be explicable according to the same *form* of explanation. According to this resolution of the dispute, the problem with the materialist is that he ignores the differences between things, though he rightly sees that they should be explicable according to the same general laws. The problem with the vitalist is that, though he rightly sees the differences between things, he goes on to hold that they should be explicable according to different kinds of laws. The middle path between them stresses that life and matter are different kinds of things (content) but different manifestations or appearances of the same general laws (form). Only if we take this third position do we both save the appearances—the phenomenological differences between the living and non-living—and uphold the principle of the unity of nature. While the materialist insists on unity at the expense of difference, the vitalist insists on difference at the expense of unity; the middle path alone brings together unity-in-difference by subsuming different things under the same form of explanation.

Both these strategies appear in Lotze's texts, in the *Allgemeine Pathologie* and "Leben. Lebenskraft". They are not entirely consistent, however. While the first assumes that mechanism cannot be sufficient for the explanation of life, the second supposes that it can be. This tension reflects Lotze's own vacillation about the status of teleology, which in some places he regards as a kind of explanation, in others as not really a form of explanation at all but as a mere heuristic device to find explanations. These strategies can be rendered consistent, however, *provided that* we place Lotze's second strategy in a reinforcing role where it works on a counterfactual assumption: namely, that even if *per impossible* mechanism were sufficient, it still could not reduce life down to matter.

Assuming that these strategies are compatible, the general worldview that emerges from Lotze's early physiological writings is that of a gentle and qualified naturalism. It is naturalism because it insists that everything within nature should be explicable according to general laws, where these laws take a strict mechanical form. It is, however, a *gentle* naturalism because it renounces materialism and stresses the basic difference between living and non-living things. Though living things are explicable according to the same general mechanical laws as non-living ones, they are not the same in kind as non-living ones, because they in fact have a very different chemical structure from non-living things. It is also a *qualified* naturalism because it leaves open the general metaphysical question about the creation of nature and the origin of life itself. Though Lotze did not pursue the issue in this article, he had left open the possibility, indeed the necessity, for a supernatural dimension which is the source of nature and life itself.

Though a staunch defender of mechanism within nature, Lotze re-instated the general teleological view of nature as an organism, according to which everything within it conforms to an end. The thoroughgoing mechanism of nature is only a means or instrument for the achievement of these ends. At this stage, Lotze's organic view did not mean panpsychism, the doctrine that everything in nature is alive, but only that everything in it, even if dead, plays a necessary role in the realization of nature's ends. We shall eventually see, however, that Lotze was driven back toward panpsychism, which would prove to be the only means for him to get the mechanical and teleological, the executive and legislative powers of nature to mesh.

#### 4. *Leipziger Allerlei* and the Dorpat Affair

The second Leipzig period, 1839 to 1844, was Lotze's most creative. It was during these years that Lotze published his *Metaphysik*, *Allgemeine Pathologie* and *Logik*, not to mention substantial articles for Wagner's *Handwörterbuch der Physiologie*. Besides these writings there were also his lectures, which he gave on a variety of subjects. Lotze was so busy and productive during these years that one would think he spent all his time working. But our Hermann was no dull boy. There was not only work but play in his life. Anything but a hermit, Lotze had a full and rewarding social life in Leipzig. He was an avid participant in the literary salons, or *Abendkränzchen* as they were known,<sup>48</sup> common in Leipzig society. When, one must ask, did these people sleep?

One salon in particular is noteworthy. In the early 1840s the publisher Karl Reimer formed an *Abendkränzchen* with the purpose of discussing academic, political and literary affairs. Its members were notables of Leipzig society, among them Weiße, Fechner, Mortiz Haupt, Salomon Hirzel, and Hermann Härtel, the music publisher

<sup>48</sup> Literally, a "*Kränzchen*" is a little wreath or garland. But it could also be a kind of cake eaten with coffee, which is the meaning appropriate here. Pester points out, *Lotze*, 72–73, that the term served to make these meetings seem harmless to the authorities, who were always suspicious of intellectual gatherings.

of the firm Breitkopf & Härtel. The group would meet on Fridays, and so was called the “*Freitagskränzchen*”. Because of Härtel’s connections with the musical world, his salon would sometimes have eminent composers and musicians as guests. Among its occasional guests were Felix Mendelssohn, Robert and Klara Schumann, and the conductor, composer and violinist Joseph Joachim. Most probably, Lotze met these luminaries.<sup>49</sup> Along with the Friday *Abendkränzchen* Weiße and Fechner would meet regularly to discuss philosophy.<sup>50</sup> It is likely that Lotze, who was on close terms with both, also took part in some of their meetings.

In reminiscing about these happy Leipzig days, Lotze later regretted that he did not see much of Fechner in the salons.<sup>51</sup> The reason was tragic: in 1840 Fechner suffered a complete physical and mental collapse.<sup>52</sup> His teaching and publishing obligations had so overtaxed him that he could no longer do anything but the most simple tasks; and his optical experiments, which required prolonged observations of the sun, had damaged his eyes to the point that they were sensitive to the slightest daylight. So, for four years, Fechner withdrew from the world into a dark room, scarcely able to eat or sleep, and entirely unable to see or talk. Through the worst of his ordeal, Weiße and Lotze stayed by his side. Lotze would visit Fechner often, to show support and read to him. Johannes Kuntze, Fechner’s biographer, had these vivid memories of Lotze’s visits:

Along with his relatives, the most loyal to stand by the sick Fechner were two philosophers: Weiße, the old friend from his youth, and Lotze, the younger friend. The latter, still unmarried and living less socially, visited Fechner during his illness rather regularly, often almost daily. Mostly quiet and withdrawn, unless he was reading [to Fechner], he remained during his visits extremely taciturn. The effect of the atmosphere in the house upon him he expressed through silence. We called him “the house ghost”. I can still see him standing before me, the small thin little man with his large well-formed head. Without saying a word he would step into Fechner’s darkened room, sit himself on a chair beside the door and seldom open his mouth; he was like one of the friends of Job, who would sit all day long on the earth next to the horribly suffering man without speaking to him, “for they saw that the pain was so great”.<sup>53</sup>

Poverty still cast a heavy shadow during these Leipzig years. Since Lotze had no inheritance, and since his lectures were gratis, he had no regular source of income. His savings from his brief stint as a country doctor could not have been much nor lasted very long. Just how Lotze maintained himself from 1839 to 1842 is something of a mystery. Wentscher speculates that he had received help from a *Stiftung* in Zittau.<sup>54</sup>

Lotze’s fortunes finally changed in the autumn of 1842. The publication of the *Metaphysik* and *Allgemeine Pathologie* were now beginning to bring him recognition.

<sup>49</sup> See Louise Härtel’s November 12, 1847, letter to Lotze, where she describes the memorial concert for Mendelssohn, who died unexpectedly the week before. *Briefe und Dokumente*, 193.

<sup>50</sup> See Kuntze, *Fechner*, 141–142, 169.

<sup>51</sup> See the reminiscence in his “Nachgelassener Aufsatz über Göthe”, in *Kleine Schriften* III/2, 542–543.

<sup>52</sup> Fechner himself gave a long account of his breakdown, which appears in Kuntze, *Fechner*, 105–126.

<sup>53</sup> Kuntze, *Fechner*, 141.

<sup>54</sup> Wentscher, *Lotze*, 46, 361n32.

A.W. Volkmann, one of his old teachers, was very impressed with the *Allgemeine Pathologie*, which he read in the Summer of 1842. Now a professor of physiology at the University of Dorpat in the Russian province of Estonia, Volkmann resolved to recruit Lotze for that university; and he even managed to secure for him a tempting offer: an ordinary professorship with a salary of 1800 *Reichstaler*! That was an offer difficult to refuse, especially for a destitute academic.

Though tempted, Lotze was reluctant to leave his homeland for the cultural isolation of Estonia. So he resorted to the only strategy left to him: he used the offer as a bargaining chip. Shortly after receiving word of the impending offer, Lotze wrote Eduard Wietersheim, Saxon Minister of Culture, November 22, 1842, sending him copies of his books and informing him of the offer from Dorpat.<sup>55</sup> Lotze told Wietersheim that he would prefer to stay in Leipzig, but that he would have to leave if he could not receive a regular salary as an extraordinary professor. He knew that Leipzig could not afford to match the Dorpat offer; but he was willing to settle for less, for a salaried extraordinary professorship in Leipzig for an ordinary one on the Estonian tundra.

What makes Lotze's letter to Wietersheim so interesting is less his bargaining tactics than his intellectual ideals. In trying to coax Wietersheim to make a counteroffer, Lotze had to sell himself, and in the course of doing so he set forth his chief goals as philosopher and professor. He wrote that his aspirations were to keep alive the sense for philosophy among medical students, to maintain the philosophical spirit when it was in danger of extinction from the growing emphasis on empirical research. His ideal was to bring together philosophy and medicine, which had been torn apart by the increasing division of academic labor. We can see from this letter how much Lotze was still devoted to the ideal of *Naturphilosophie*, and how far he was from a one-sided partisan of empirical science. Given his dual training in medicine and philosophy, and given his publications in both fields, Lotze told Wietersheim that he was singularly qualified to achieve his ideals. And so he boldly requested a salaried double appointment in both medicine and philosophy. Lotze's case was supported by influential colleagues. Gottfried Hermann, the eminent philologist, wrote Wietersheim the very same day as Lotze, singing his praises and requesting that the utmost be done to save such a remarkable talent for Saxony.<sup>56</sup> The whole issue had much urgency because Lotze had to decide on the Dorpat offer before Christmas.

The request did not fall on deaf ears. Though he had little money, Wietersheim was sympathetic. Before he could do anything, however, he first had to get the approval of both the medical and philosophical faculties. He asked them to consider, as quickly as possible, Lotze's request.

The faculties responded with all due speed. The philosophy faculty approved of Lotze's appointment as a salaried extraordinary professor, though it did not like the idea of a joint professorship in philosophy and medicine. The philosophers feared that

<sup>55</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 121–123.

<sup>56</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 120–121.

this could jeopardize future appointments in philosophy proper.<sup>57</sup> The medicine faculty, however, unanimously rejected Lotze's request.<sup>58</sup> In a long letter to the Cultural Ministry, signed by the entire faculty, they gave two grounds for their decision: that Lotze advocated, in a partisan spirit, a strictly mechanical philosophy, for which there was insufficient empirical evidence; and that Lotze's *Allgemeine Pathologie* was too speculative and philosophical to aid the practical training of doctors. Lotze was, they insisted, a stranger to the arts of experiment and observation, which were now a prerequisite for all research in medicine. Rather than spending his time and energy in the laboratory, he was writing books from a speculative a priori standpoint. "Medicine is an empirical science!",<sup>59</sup> they protested.

It is striking that both the philosophy and medical faculties rejected precisely what Lotze regarded as his chief strength: the goal of joining philosophy and medicine. Lotze was struggling—in vain—against the growing academic division of labor. The medical faculty saw in him a devotee of *Naturphilosophie*, which had been discredited with the advance of empirical research. The goal of bringing philosophy into medicine seemed to them to be a return to the bad old days of Schelling and Hegel, who had applied an a priori methodology to solve issues that could be decided only by observation and experiment. They simply ignored Lotze's own critique of that methodology, and his own efforts to distance himself from Schelling and Hegel. For Lotze, it was one thing to be aware of the philosophical issues embedded in physiology and quite another to apply an a priori methodology. But these were subtleties for which the medical faculty had little patience. They turned a blind eye to Lotze's criticism of mechanism in the *Allgemeine Pathologie*, and they seemed oblivious to the glaring contradiction in their image of Lotze, who was somehow both *Naturphilosoph* and radical mechanist! The weakness and unfairness in the medical faculties' case makes one suspect that more than intellectual issues were at stake, and that personal factors also played a role. Sure enough, Ernst Weber was offended by Lotze's criticism of vital force in his "Lebenskraft" article; and Johann Christian Heinroth, the head of the faculty, was not pleased with Lotze's ambition to have *his* old chair for medicine and philosophy.

Given the resistance of the medical faculty, Lotze had to settle for little. Wietersheim could grant only his request to be an extraordinary professor in philosophy, and for that he would receive the very modest salary of 300 thalers. The academic politics left a bitter taste. Through the grapevine Lotze learned what had been said about him in the medical faculty.<sup>60</sup> He was insulted and inclined to make an official protest; only the rumors that Marburg and Göttingen were also interested in him kept him from

<sup>57</sup> "Gutachten der Phil. Fakultät der Universität Leipzig, 01.12.1842", *Briefe und Dokumente*, 128–129.

<sup>58</sup> "Bericht der Med. Fakultät an das Kultusministerium in Dresden, 14.12.1842", *Briefe und Dokumente*, 130–132.

<sup>59</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 131.

<sup>60</sup> See Lotze to Rudolph Wagner, January 14, 1843, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 134.

publicly defending himself. All the ill feeling made Lotze want to leave Leipzig, the very place for which he had bargained to stay.

Aside from these personal issues, the Dorpat affair reveals much about Lotze's place in the history of philosophy. In his faith in the unity of science and the importance of philosophy in science, Lotze showed himself to be, yet again, a late romantic. This faith had been central to the philosophy of Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel and Schelling, who made it the inspiration for their *Naturphilosophie*, for their attempt to make an encyclopedia or system of philosophy. But that faith was now rapidly disappearing, a victim of the specialization of the modern academic world. Lotze wanted to keep the flame burning in the 1840s; but in doing so he showed himself to be a relic of the now rapidly waning romantic age.

## 5. Early Logic

As the Dorpat affair came to its sorry close in January 1843, Lotze, now sure he would remain in Leipzig, began to prepare his lectures for the next semester. Among these lectures were those entitled "Logik und Enzyklopädie der Philosophie".<sup>61</sup> Very likely these were the basis for his second major philosophical work, his simply-titled *Logik*, which appeared in the autumn of 1843.<sup>62</sup> Just why Lotze turned to this subject we do not know, since there is scarcely any mention of it in his correspondence. Most probably, his interest in it came from the need to give introductory lectures on philosophy. But his reflections on logic also grew out of some of the issues raised in his *Metaphysik*. Together, the *Logik* and *Metaphysik* provide complementary perspectives of the same worldview.

*Prima facie* there is not much new about Lotze's early *Logik*. It accepts the traditional classification of the forms of syllogism, and it adopts the classical division of the subject into concepts, judgments and inferences. We are still very far here from the modern formal logic created by Lotze's greatest student, Gottlob Frege. Nevertheless, in several respects the work anticipates modern developments: it exposes errors in the traditional theory of concept formation; it criticizes classical logic for its impotence in explaining the individuality of things; and, foreshadowing Frege's greatest innovation, it proposes replacing subject-predicate propositions with functions. Though Lotze did his duty, painstakingly working his way through the forms of judgment and syllogism, he realized that this had become a barren and sterile routine, of little relevance to the logic of the new sciences. In the fundamental shift in the late nineteenth century away from the concept of a substance and toward that of a function Lotze's early *Logik* deserves an honored place.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Wentscher, *Lotze*, 80.

<sup>62</sup> *Logik* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1843). All references in parentheses are to this, the only edition.

<sup>63</sup> On that shift, see Ernst Cassirer, *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff* (Berlin: Cassirer, 1910). It is noteworthy that Cassirer cites Lotze in just this regard, 8, 27–28. Cassirer cites the second edition of Lotze's *System der Logik*, though the central moves were already made in the earlier 1843 work.



When Lotze was writing about the subject in the early 1840s the identity of logic was still very much in flux. To be sure, as a purely formal discipline, logic had not changed much from Aristotle's day. The classification of the basic forms of judgment and inference had remained essentially the same. Since Kant, however, all kinds of question had been raised about the foundations of logic and its relationship to other disciplines. Is logic part of ontology? Is it part of psychology? Or is logic autonomous? Does logic need a higher foundation? Does it presuppose transcendental philosophy? Or does transcendental philosophy presuppose it? All these questions had received very different, even conflicting answers, so that the very nature of logic had become controversial.

Through this welter of questions the young Lotze had to steer his way. The first paragraph of his *Logik* refers to the fluid state of the discipline, and in its long introduction he attempts to take his stand regarding the controversies of his day. Lotze begins by taking issue with the view that logic should be a purely formal discipline, a study of the basic forms of judgment and inference and nothing more (3–5). If this is all logic should be, he objects, then it not only becomes dry and tedious; it also becomes nearly useless, because most mistakes in thinking do not arise from purely formal errors (3). Logic must have a purpose, which is the acquisition of knowledge. If, however, we limit logic to the mere forms of judgment and syllogism alone, then it does not fulfill this purpose, because these forms are compatible with falsity as much as truth (3–4). To serve as an effective instrument of knowledge, then, logic should be brought into closer relation to the sciences, and it should be, at least in part, epistemology (5). Logic needs to include epistemology not least because it cannot avoid questions about its own foundations and origins (5).

It was chiefly Herbart who, in Lotze's day, had stressed the autonomy of logic. He had made a sharp distinction between the *activity* of thinking, which is the subject of psychology, and the *content* of thought, which is the subject of logic.<sup>64</sup> Logic would be utterly ruined, Herbart warned, if one brought into it enquiries into the origin of logical forms.<sup>65</sup> So determined was Herbart on keeping psychology out of logic that he even questioned whether the content of thought, in the strict logical sense, ever appears to the mind.<sup>66</sup> Lotze found this all too extreme. While he too insists upon the normative status of logic (6, 7, 9), he thinks that Herbart went too far in banishing all enquiry into the basis or source of logic. There is a glaring discrepancy, in his view, between Herbart's insistence on the importance of logic and his refusal to allow enquiry into its foundation (6). For if logic is the basis of all of knowledge, as Herbart proclaims, do we not have the right, indeed the duty, to ask *how* it provides such knowledge? (7)

<sup>64</sup> Herbart, *Lehrbuch zur Einleitung in die Philosophie*, in *Sämtliche Werke* IV, 67, §34. "In der Logik ist es nothwendig alles Psychologische zu ignorieren..." (68; §34). Cf. 78; §52.

<sup>65</sup> Herbart, *Lehrbuch zur Einleitung*, 68n; §35.

<sup>66</sup> Herbart, *Lehrbuch der Psychologie*, *Sämtliche Werke* IV, 320; §36.

Accepting that there should be enquiry into the foundations of logic, what form should such an enquiry take? Lotze warns against the two approaches current in his day (7). One approach is psychological: it sees logical forms as laws of the constitution of the human mind. The other is metaphysical: it regards logical forms as laws of being, the ontological structure of things. Both are problematic, in Lotze's view. The psychological approach suffers many difficulties (8–9). First, its method is circular: it derives each form from a faculty; but it discovers the faculty on the basis of the form. Second, it treats logical forms as having a purely subjective status, as if they are only our human ways of thinking about things. Last but not least, it fails to recognize the normative status of logic, which consists essentially in prescriptions about how we ought to think rather than in descriptions about how we as a matter of fact do think. The metaphysical approach, represented chiefly by Hegel, also commits grave errors. So keen was Hegel to avoid the merely subjective status of logical form that he fell into the opposite error: he exaggerated its objective status. He made this mistake by simply identifying logical form with the structure of being (10). In the third book of his *Wissenschaft der Logik*, for example, he treats the syllogism as if it were a process within nature. But this overlooks the role of the syllogism in organizing and expounding the *thinking of the subject*. The chief problem with this simple equation of logic with nature is that it becomes impossible to raise the question: How does logic give us *knowledge of nature*? (11–12) Hegel does not answer that question; he only begs it.

Granted these approaches are bankrupt, how should we investigate the basis of logical forms? What approach avoids psychologism on the one hand and metaphysical dogmatism on the other hand? Lotze falls back on a line of thought already sketched at the end of his *Metaphysik*. The basis of logic, no less than that of metaphysics, lies in ethics (9). Although we cannot derive the forms of logic from a single *principle*, we can show that they all answer to a single *purpose* (7). We can show how these forms serve as necessary means toward human ends, or how they help the mind to realize its “ethical nature” (9). The foundation of logic should then lie in a “*teleological*” viewpoint, i.e., one that shows the purpose of logical forms in the general mental economy of a moral being. Such a moral approach will avoid the problems of psychologism, Lotze implies, because it will derive the laws of logic not from faculties or facts of consciousness but from moral ends, which have a normative status all their own. These laws will be shown to be means to ends, necessary conditions for the realization of human purposes. And so Lotze suggests: “Just like metaphysics, the beginning of logic lies in ethics, and indeed through the middle term of metaphysics itself” (9).

What does Lotze mean by the ethical foundations of logic? What are these moral purposes? And how was logic a means to them? Unfortunately, Lotze's central thesis is as vague as it is suggestive, and he leaves it largely to the reader to fill in the details. Part of what he means is rather prosaic: that logic is a normative discipline, and that these norms serve a purpose, namely, the acquisition of knowledge. Logic is not simply a matter of connecting concepts in judgments, and then connecting judgments in inferences, but it is also about judging and inferring for the sake of acquiring knowledge

(14). The laws of thought determine the conditions for achieving that purpose, and as such they determine means toward ends. This prosaic point still leaves unclear, however, how logic, in serving the end of knowledge, is directed by an *ethical* purpose. Lotze only suggests that it is “the good” that makes valid thinking into a condition of knowledge (23). But what, exactly, this good consists in he does not explain.

Lotze’s meaning becomes a little clearer from his critique of Herbart and Hegel. Although Lotze gives Herbart credit for stressing the normative status of logic, he also complains that Herbart unwittingly undermines this very point by tracing the origins of the logical forms to the psychological mechanisms of habit and association (15). As much as Herbart held logic apart from psychology, he still allowed psychology to enter into the deepest recesses of logic by deriving the basic forms of thought from experience.<sup>67</sup> These forms meant nothing more to him than “the universal regularity of experience according to the laws of psychological mechanism”. They were not even characteristically human, on Herbart’s showing, because even animals organized their experience according to them.<sup>68</sup> He therefore misses, Lotze counters, what is central to all logical thinking: the active role of the subject in judging and inferring (16–17). The association of representations is the precondition for logical thinking, to be sure, but it still misses the essential element: the spontaneous thinking subject. On Herbart’s view, logical thinking is like an event in nature, a process taking place inside a mental stage that we regard with detachment and disinterest; the only problem is that it leaves out of account the subject who judges and infers. There are two kinds of connection involved in logical thinking, Lotze explains (19). There is the association of representations, their connection according to habit and repeated experience, just as Herbart claims; but there is also the connection of representations through judgment and inference. This second form of connection involves some activity on the part of the subject, and more specifically the act of evaluation, the assessment of the representations, the determination whether they deserve to be regarded as true. Lotze calls this second form of connection “critique” because it involves the act of evaluating representations to determine whether they help the mind to achieve its end of truth.

Although Hegel’s approach to logic is the opposite of Herbart’s, Lotze thinks that Hegel and Herbart are uncommon bedfellows. They share a similar defect: both neglect the role of the spontaneous subject in conceiving, judging and reasoning (20–1). Herbart and Hegel both objectify logical form, alienating it from the subject which creates and uses it. While Herbart places logical form in the mechanisms of the mind, Hegel puts it in the processes of nature. But, whether in psychological processes or in nature, the logical form is cut off from its source, the spontaneous activity of mind that conceives, judges and reasons, the act of evaluation that enters into all logical form.

<sup>67</sup> Herbart, *Psychologie als Wissenschaft neu gegründet auf Erfahrung, Metaphysik und Mathematik*, *Sämtliche Werke*, V, 129; §124.

<sup>68</sup> Herbart, *Psychologie*, 128, §123.

Here, in Lotze's insistence on the role of evaluation involved in judgment, we see the beginnings of the later philosophy of value of Windelband, Rickert and Lask.

From his stance toward Hegel and Herbart we can now have a better idea of what Lotze means by the ethical foundation of logic. Such a foundation will take into account precisely what Herbart and Hegel neglected: the spontaneous activity of the subject. The ethical foundation of logic will recognize the fundamental role of the activity of the subject in constituting knowledge. Not accidentally, this is the very same activity that is the source of moral values and free actions. In reifying this activity Herbart and Hegel had forfeited the power of the subject to take control over the logical forms, to direct them so that they serve its purposes. But once we recognize "the active, self-conscious principle" (17), as Lotze puts it, we will be able to restore the integrity of the subject, to give it effective control over the forms of logic so that they better serve its ends.

Lotze's emphases on the role of the spontaneous subject, and on the act of "criticism" involved in all logical operations, allude to Kant. Sure enough, Lotze explicitly affirms his debt to Kant on several scores: the relation between sensibility and understanding, the need for apperception to accompany representations, the role of apperception in creating and applying the categories, the value of the schematism in connecting categories with experience (25–29). The only respect in which Lotze differs from Kant is in his greater emphasis on the role of logic in the apprehension of experience (27–29). The purely formal thinking involved in logic is for him another instrument by which the mind categorizes its experience (29–30). While such formal thinking is insufficient for knowing, because a given content is also required, the fact remains that it is also necessary to it. It is necessary to add, however, that, however crucial Kant was for Lotze's general conception of logic, he played little role in his account of the formal structure of the discipline. Lotze rejected Kant's theory of the synthetic a priori and he found Kant's classification of the forms of judgment untenable and useless (88–95).

The first part of Lotze's *Logik*, which expounds his theory of concepts, is most notable for its critique of the traditional theory of concept formation (64–65). According to this theory, we form concepts by abstraction, by finding what particulars have in common and by eliding the differences between them. What we get in the end is a universal term which is great in extent, i.e., in the number of things to which it applies, but poor in content, i.e., in the marks or features it contains. The chief problem with this theory, Lotze argues, is that abstraction cannot be a means for generating concepts for the simple reason that we must already have the concept to perform the abstraction. No manifold of particulars tells us *how* to abstract from them or *which* features we should focus upon; there are so many different aspects under which we can view it that we have no idea what we should look for. The abstraction therefore has to proceed according to some rule, according to at least some vague notion of what it is necessary to abstract from and to bring together (64–65). That rule or notion will then be our concept (68). We must not conceive the universal, Lotze further contends,

as if it were some abstraction having little content, emptied of all the marks or features of the particular things to which it applies (71–2). The concept still has a very rich content, and it contains all the marks or features of the things to which it applies; it's just that these marks or features have now become indeterminate. When we acquire the concept of a metal, for example, we do not lose the features of color, weight and density; they are still within the concept, it's only that the concept refers to an *indeterminate* color, weight and density. The way in which we form concepts, Lotze explains, is not by abstraction but by substitution: we substitute something indeterminate for something determinate (74). In proposing substitution as the method of concept formation, Lotze is suggesting that we see concepts as variables for which we can substitute different values.

The most remarkable aspect of Lotze's theory of judgment, which forms the second part of his *Logik*, is his account of the law of identity. Here Lotze sheds a little more light on what he means by the ethical foundation of logic. He disputes Weiße's interpretation of this law, which sees it as a statement about the identity of things throughout change (108).<sup>69</sup> It is a serious mistake, he argues, to think that this law assumes that there are permanent things in our experience, or that it supposes that there are respects in which things are the same. Even if everything in our experience were in constant flux, and even if everything were utterly different from one another, the law would still be valid (110). If the law were about the identity or permanence of things in experience, it would be utterly useless because it provides no criterion by which we can determine whether things are identical or not (110). The meaning of the law is for Lotze normative, so that 'A is A' means 'A ought to be A', where 'A' can be anything whatsoever. What justifies this law? It cannot be justified on the basis of experience, as we have seen; but it also cannot be demonstrated a priori, because it is the presupposition of all demonstration (113). The only justification of the law of identity, Lotze contends, is the mind's "deeper ethical nature" (114). The law of identity is not imposed upon the mind like some higher form of fate but it is "a means to its ends" (113). To achieve its ends effectively, he suggests, the mind needs to grasp things as the same, even if everything in experience itself proves to be in constant flux and even if every thing in its experience is different from everything else. Just why the mind must assume this identity to achieve its ends, however, Lotze does not further explain.

What is so striking about Lotze's account of the law of identity, however, is less its ethical basis than his insistence that this law is the sole form of true judgments, i.e., *all* true judgments should be instances of the law of identity.<sup>70</sup> We do not expect Lotze, who is otherwise such a Kantian, to affirm such classic rationalist doctrine; but

<sup>69</sup> Hermann Christian Weiße, "Ueber die philosophische Bedeutung des logischen Grundsatzes der Identität", *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und spekulative Theologie* IV (1839), 1–29.

<sup>70</sup> There was a long tradition of treating all true judgments as instances of the law of identity. Leibniz famously explains in section §8 of the *Discours de Métaphysique* that in all true propositions the predicate must be contained, explicitly or implicitly, in the notion of the subject. A similar doctrine was advanced by Gottfried Ploucquet (1716–1790), who was the teacher of logic in the *Tübinger Stift* from 1750 to 1782. See his *Logik*, ed. Michael Franz (Hildesheim: Olms, 2006), 2–5, which is a German translation of Ploucquet's *Expositiones philosophiae theoreticae* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1782). Ploucquet's influence on the teaching of logic in the *Tübinger Stift*, where Schelling, Hegel and Hölderlin were once students, connects him indirectly with Lotze. There is no evidence, however, that Lotze knew of Ploucquet. Moritz Drobisch refers to

he affirms it explicitly and emphatically all the same. The premise of his theory is a very strict and literal interpretation of the law of identity, ‘A is A’ or ‘A is not non-A’, according to which it states everything should be purely and entirely self-identical (112). On Lotze’s reading, the law states something like Butler’s famous dictum: “everything is what it is and nothing else”. If we take this law strictly, he argues, then it excludes any proposition of the form ‘A is B’ (111). As Lotze explains: “...for as long as the rule is valid, ‘A is not non-A’, the proposition ‘A is B’ is false, and therefore there cannot be categorical but only identical judgments” (111). Lotze is indeed very explicit that the law excludes not only opposites—A and not-A—but also difference—i.e., any synthetic proposition of the form ‘A is B’ (112). The only philosopher who has rightly seen this, Lotze says, is Hegel. The agreement with this most controversial doctrine of Hegel’s logic is all the more surprising, given Lotze’s own sharp criticisms of Hegel. It makes it necessary to qualify the view that Lotze’s logic was a re-affirmation of Kantian doctrine against Hegel.<sup>71</sup>

Such an interpretation of the law of identity raises the obvious problem that all propositions of the form ‘A is B’ are, literally and strictly taken, false. *Prima facie* we can avoid the problem simply by distinguishing between the “is” of identity and the “is” of predication, as Russell famously advised. Although Lotze is fully aware of the distinction between the two forms of predication (115–116), he questions whether it really solves the problem. To say that propositions of the form ‘A is B’ attribute a contingent property or “accident” of their subject does not help, he maintains, because the concept of an “accident” is too vague; we are still left with the question how a single self-identical thing can be something else (117). Lotze thinks that he can solve the problem by postulating a mediating term between subject and predicate, which would be the concept of the whole of which the subject and predicates are parts (120). We can then say that propositions of the form ‘A is B’ are *incomplete* or *implicit* statements of identity because ‘B’ is only some part of the whole concept of ‘A’. There is then no contradiction between statements of the form ‘A is A’ and ‘A is B’ because they have different logical subjects: in the first case ‘A’ refers to the whole of A and in the second case to one part of ‘A’ (123). Properly construed, all synthetic judgments of the form ‘A is B’ are hypothetical analytic statements of the form ‘If A, then B’, where B infers what is involved in the content of ‘A’ (123). All that we need to convert synthetic judgments into analytic ones is a fuller statement about the concept of the subject and the conditions under which it appears (124). All true propositions are then instances

Ploucquet in his *Neue Darstellung der Logik*, Dritte Auflage (Leipzig: Voss, 1863), 63, a text which Lotze read (see to Apelt, June 17, 1840, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 111), but the reference is too slight to have had any effect. On Ploucquet, see Michael Franz’s introduction to *Logik*, vii–li; Karl Aner, *Gottfried Ploucquet Leben und Lehre* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1909); Wolfgang Lenzen, “Der logische Calcul Herrn Prof. Ploucquet”, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 90 (2008), 74–114; and Michael Franz, “Gottfried Ploucquet’s Urteilslehre”, *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 59 (2005), 95–113. The immediate source of Lotze’s doctrine appears to have been Hegel alone.

<sup>71</sup> Wentscher, *Lotze*, 83.

of the principle of sufficient reason, where the sufficient reason for the predicate is already contained in the full concept of the subject and its conditions (126). Lotze's solution to the problem of synthetic propositions is thus as Hegelian as his reading of the law of identity itself. To see all such propositions as attributions of parts to wholes is essentially what Hegel meant by his "speculative proposition". So for all his critique of Hegel's confusion of logic with metaphysics, Lotze persisted in holding onto some of the central themes of his logic.

The third part of the *Logik*, which deals with the forms of inference, is where Lotze is most critical of traditional logic. After going through the various forms of the syllogism, Lotze is skeptical that they have much value in modern science. They are more suited for the exposition of knowledge, when it has already been acquired, than for the discovery of knowledge itself (190). All syllogistic reasoning is ultimately tautological, simply making explicit what is already contained in the premises; and the premises are certain only if they are analytic (188). Inductive inferences are really essential to the acquisition of knowledge; but they are not, strictly speaking, valid, because a universal conclusion never follows from particular premises (176–177). All inductive generalizations have something both joyful and miserable about them: joyful, because they move beyond mere tautologies; but miserable, because they cannot prove the conclusion or show us why something must be the case (175). But the main reason syllogistic reasoning is such a disappointment, Lotze remarks, is that it works by subsuming particular cases under universals, and so by ignoring the particularity of things (192). For example, we know from Barbara, the syllogism of the first form, which is the basis for all the others, that if all men are mortal, and that if Socrates is a man, then Socrates is mortal. Such reasoning works by subsuming Socrates under the general predicate of mortality. But sometimes what we want to know is what makes just this man, Socrates, mortal, and not simply what he shares in common with all other men (192). When we attribute a predicate to a subject in traditional logic, the predicate is more universal than the subject and it therefore leaves out much of its content (191). When we learn that iron is expandable because it is a metal and all metals are expandable, we do not learn what specifically makes iron expandable.

It is to deal with this inadequacy of traditional syllogisms that Lotze introduces into his logic two new kinds of syllogism, those of substitution and proportionality, which are modeled on mathematics (193–207). These mathematical forms of reasoning, he contends, show us how the universal is modified in particular cases. Rather than abstracting from particular cases, they show us how the universal appears in them or is "specified" by them. It is in expounding this form of reasoning that Lotze anticipates Frege's *Begriffsschrift*, for here he advises replacing concepts with functions. To show how the universal appears in the particular, he recommends that we first analyze the universal term into its constituent parts or marks, and then show how its application to a particular case adds some features, or drops and changes others (194). Applying a mathematical analogy, he calls this the method of substitution. This method is followed in mathematical analysis, he says, where we substitute for some



abstract expression its component quantities. If we apply this method to the syllogism, we would get a syllogism of the following form, or what he calls the “syllogism of substitution”: 1)  $M = a + bx + cx \dots$ ; 2)  $S = F(M)$ ; 3)  $S = F(a + bx + cx)$ . What is noteworthy about such a syllogism, Lotze explains, is that the minor premise does not subsume  $S$  under the middle term  $M$  but shows it to be a “specific function” of  $M$  (195). But no sooner does Lotze propose replacing concepts with functions than he retreats from the very idea. He fears that it is difficult to apply this kind of mathematical analysis to qualitative concepts (197). Nevertheless, he insists that such analysis deserves to be called a form of reasoning in its own right, a form which has been too much neglected by the traditional logic (197–198).

The syllogism of proportionality, the other form of mathematical reasoning, has premises that specify a law-like relation between quantities where they co-vary with one another (202). While the traditional logic could not do much more than state that one phenomenon depends on or varies with the other, this mathematical form of reasoning shows us exactly *how much* one quantity depends on the other. It will show us, for example, just how much the expansion of a gas is a function of its temperature, so that the expansion will vary from  $E$  to  $e$  as the temperature varies from  $T$  to  $t$ . The syllogism would then take the form: 1)  $E:eT:t$ . 2) In a certain case  $C$ ,  $T$  changes to  $t\delta$ . 3) Therefore, in  $C$ ,  $E$  changes to  $e\delta$ . Lotze maintains that it is only when we know precise proportions of this kind that we have real knowledge of matter of fact (203). The syllogism of proportionality gives us, he suggests, what we cannot get through the subject-predicate form: namely, knowledge of the connection between distinct things (206). Real knowledge of nature, Lotze maintains, comes from such quantitative laws and not from the qualitative subject-predicate judgments of traditional logic.

Having considered these points from the third part of Lotze's *Logik*, we are now in a better position to see the parallel between his metaphysics and logic. That parallel lies not only in the ethical foundation Lotze gives to logic as well as metaphysics; it also consists in the specific content he gives to each discipline. For just as the *Metaphysik* recommends replacing the concept of substance with that of law, so the *Logik* advises replacing the subject-predicate logic with the concept of a function. In each case Lotze moves away from the old Aristotelian worldview whose metaphysics of substance lay behind its syllogistic logic and its adherence to the subject-predicate form.

## 6. Westphalian Song and Dance

Living in academic poverty, Lotze could not shun any opportunity. And, as often happens in life, opportunities knock at the same time. So it was for Lotze in the autumn of 1842. While still in the midst of the Dorpat affair, he entered secret negotiations for a position at another university.

In November 1842 Lotze had received a letter from Rudolph Wagner, professor of comparative physiology and zoology at the University of Göttingen, asking him if he would be interested in a position there. The professorship of speculative philosophy in



Göttingen had fallen vacant since Herbart's death in 1841, and Wagner was intent on finding a suitable successor. Lotze was highly flattered and excited by Wagner's interest. Here, at the very least, was a card to play in his negotiations with Wietersheim! So he wrote Wagner in December 1842 saying that he would be very grateful for anything done in his behalf at Göttingen; he reassured Wagner that he regarded his present position in Leipzig only as a bridge toward something better.<sup>72</sup> Thus began a fateful series of negotiations which would set the course for the rest of Lotze's career. Given their importance for Lotze and ultimately German philosophy, we do well to follow them in a little detail.<sup>73</sup>

Wagner's attempt to recruit Lotze for Göttingen was highly ideological. Religious and political motivations played a heavy role. Shortly after its publication in the summer of 1841, Wagner had read Lotze's *Allgemeine Pathologie* and had been deeply impressed, so much so that he asked Lotze to write some of the leading articles for his forthcoming *Handwörterbuch der Physiologie*.<sup>74</sup> It is striking that Wagner saw in Lotze's work the very opposite of the Leipzig medical faculty. He was not troubled by Lotze's mechanism but attracted by the limitations he had placed upon it. A man of conservative moral and religious views, Wagner had become deeply troubled by the materialist tendencies of recent physiology, and he was determined to put a stop to them. He saw in the young Lotze a promising potential ally in his campaign against materialism. Hence in his January 31, 1844, letter to Georg Friedrich Hoppenstedt, General Secretary in Hannover, the minister responsible for the university, Wagner stressed how Lotze, trained in both medicine and philosophy, could serve as an "invaluable counterweight" to the materialism now infecting "the spirit of medicine".<sup>75</sup>

It was also important for Wagner that Lotze was politically acceptable for such a conservative university as Göttingen. Ever since the late 1830s Göttingen, once the most progressive university in Germany, had been strangled by the forces of political reaction. In 1837 Ernst August, King of Hannover, abrogated the constitution of his land and demanded an oath of loyalty from all civil servants, including those at the University. When seven professors refused the oath on the grounds that they were still bound to the old constitution, Karl August peremptorily dismissed or exiled them. The so-called "*Göttinger Sieben*"—W. Albrecht (1800–1876), F.C. Dahlmann (1785–1860), G.G. Gervinus (1805–1871), G.H. Ewald (1803–1875), W. Weber (1804–1891), Jakob Grimm (1785–1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786–1859)—thus became martyrs for the liberal cause in Germany. Though in 1840

<sup>72</sup> Lotze to Rudolph Wagner, December 12, 1842, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 127.

<sup>73</sup> Lotze's correspondence concerning the Göttingen position was first published by William Woodward and Ulrike Rainer, "Berufungskorrespondenz Rudolph Hermann Lotze an Rudolph Wagner", *Sudhoffs Archiv* 59 (1975), 356–386.

<sup>74</sup> See Georg Ernst Friedrich Hoppenstedt to Karl Wilhelm August von Strahlenheim, December 25, 1843, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 157. It was not the articles for the *Wörterbuch* that interested Wagner in Lotze, *pace* Pester Lotze, 143, as these had been written after Wagner's original letter to Lotze.

<sup>75</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 162.

Ernst August honored a new constitution, he still kept a tight grip on the university. He cared little for academics, and had a rather low opinion of them: “Professors have no fatherland; professors, whores and ballet dancers one can always have at any price.”<sup>76</sup> It was in this oppressive and repressive political atmosphere that interest grew in Lotze. Though no reactionary himself, Lotze was regarded as a man of conservative temperament. Thus Wagner advocated him to Hoppenstedt on the grounds that one could seldom find “an original and active speculative direction coupled with serious and conservative principles”.<sup>77</sup> Apparently, Wagner had convinced Hoppenstedt, who now wrote to Karl Wilhelm August von Strahlenheim, Curator of the University, that Lotze was “utterly far from the destructive direction of the new Hegelian school.”<sup>78</sup> The importance of this political consideration was later made clear by Hoppenstedt, who stressed to Strahlenheim that Lotze was “a philosopher of a conservative bent”, a point he regarded as “in every respect of the utmost importance.”<sup>79</sup>

It was for both these religious and political reasons, then, that Wagner latched onto Lotze, whom he was convinced was uniquely qualified to succeed Herbart in Göttingen. That Lotze had published so much, and that he was an effective and popular lecturer, were necessary conditions of his appointment, to be sure; but they were surely not sufficient; something else was necessary, and that had much to do with religion and politics. Having decided upon his man, Wagner pulled out all the stops to get him. He sent off many letters to Hoppenstedt and Strahlenheim, singing Lotze’s praises and urging them to do all they could to make him a solid offer. To give Lotze more publicity, he placed his article “Leben. Lebenskraft” at the very beginning of his *Handwörterbuch*; and then he had Heinrich Ritter, a professor of philosophy in Göttingen, write a sympathetic review of Lotze’s *Metaphysik* for the *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeiger*.<sup>80</sup> Thus Wagner helped to create the very celebrity he was trying to sell to the ministry.

And so began a long song and dance, a complicated series of negotiations, that would eventually end with Lotze’s appointment to Herbart’s chair. In these transactions the Göttingen administration attempted to buy for the smallest price, and Lotze tried to sell himself for the highest. For someone so young, Lotze proved to be a highly skillful negotiator. His prowess can be measured by comparing the administration’s initial offer—an extraordinary professorship with 450 thalers—with their final offer—an ordinary professorship with 800 thalers. How did Lotze bring about such a triumph? His tactics are a model for every aspiring professor.

<sup>76</sup> As cited in Pester, *Lotze*, 144.

<sup>77</sup> Rudolph Wagner to Georg Ernst Friedrich Hoppenstedt, December 22, 1843, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 155.

<sup>78</sup> Georg Ernst Friedrich Hoppenstedt to Karl Wilhelm August von Strahlenheim, November 9, 1843, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 142.

<sup>79</sup> Hoppenstedt to Strahlenheim, December 25, 1843, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 156.

<sup>80</sup> *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeiger* Stück 125–127, August 1843, 1241–1254.

When Hoppenstedt, Hannover Minister for Culture, first considered making Lotze an offer in November 1843, he was excited by the prospect of hiring for cheap a desperate young *Dozent*. "Since Lotze had few prospects in Leipzig, it was probable that he would accept an *Extraordinary* professorship, and perhaps even a salary of 400 to 500 thalers."<sup>81</sup> After all, Leipzig had offered him only 300. If so, this would be an amazing bargain, considering that there were still 1500 left in the budget for Herbart's chair! But an official offer could still not be made; Wagner first had to test Lotze's interest in the position. He recommended that Lotze come to Göttingen, as soon as he could, to see the situation for himself.

Lotze's response to Wagner's request is his one misstep in the whole proceedings. On December 3, 1843, he told Wagner that he had grave misgivings about going to Göttingen.<sup>82</sup> Although he said nothing about terms of his appointment, he confessed to having "melancholy thoughts" about the whole business. He doubted that he had the physical strength, or the financial means, to travel to Göttingen in the middle of the winter. Furthermore, he had not been feeling well, suffering from dizziness, insomnia and depression. If he went to Göttingen, would Wagner even be there? And would it not seem presumptuous to come, so that the visit would backfire? Lotze whines and moans, begging Wagner for advice. Here Lotze revealed one of the weakest sides of his character: "hypochondria", to use his own word for it. It is doubtful that this was only a tactic, for Lotze had nothing to gain from it. Would Wagner want to hire such a moaner? Indeed, in a postscript, Lotze apologized for his embarrassing openness.

Having seen his mistake, Lotze quickly rebounded and started negotiations in earnest. Only two days later, December 5, 1843, he wrote Wagner that he would be indeed interested in exchanging his habilitation in Leipzig for an academic position in Göttingen, and that he would even accept it. That was enough to sustain Wagner's hopes and efforts. In saying this Lotze did not commit himself to anything, given that no conditions were specified. Lotze then went on in the letter to explain why he was dissatisfied with his position in Leipzig: his income was insufficient; and the students there were not very interested in philosophy. But he also intimated that his salary was not quite the measly 300 thalers that the government paid him; for he had an extra income from his writings, which brought his income to 750 to 900 thalers. Still, he longed for a salary that would make literary drudgery unnecessary.

Shortly after receiving Lotze's letter, Wagner must have proposed the terms of his appointment: an extraordinary professorship at 450 thalers.<sup>83</sup> The reply came quick and blunt. December 7, 1843, Lotze told Wagner that on no account could he accept such a proposal.<sup>84</sup> "In general I would very gladly come to Göttingen; but in no

<sup>81</sup> See Hoppenstedt to Strahlenheim, November 9, 1843, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 143.

<sup>82</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 144–145.

<sup>83</sup> Wagner's reply is missing; but it is easy to reconstruct its probable contents from Lotze's next letter.

<sup>84</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 148–150.

way under these conditions or something similar to them.” Lotze laid out his case. The offer of an extraordinary professorship in Göttingen was insufficient because he already had that in Leipzig. People in Leipzig had done much to keep him, and they had shown their willingness to do even more; and he would have to start all over again in Göttingen, whereas he already had a stronger foothold in Leipzig. Is he to leave everything in Leipzig, then, for an unknown future in Göttingen? And for a mere 150 thalers? Not very likely. Furthermore, he has no guarantee that he will receive the extra income in Göttingen that he now gets regularly in Leipzig. These were compelling arguments, whose force Wagner could fully see. Now he would either have to drop the whole matter or persuade his colleagues to come up with a better offer.

Still determined, Wagner renewed his efforts. On December 8 he wrote Hoppenstedt that Lotze would not come under the present terms, and he advised making him a better offer.<sup>85</sup> In his opinion, Lotze would not come to Göttingen unless they made him the offer of an ordinary professorship and an 800 thaler salary. He was now glad Lotze never did make the trip to Göttingen, because he would then see that his situation there could be very insecure. Some professors in Göttingen did not get in fees what Lotze had in Leipzig. Wagner must have received permission to persist with Lotze because only nine days later he wrote him requesting him to spell out his terms.<sup>86</sup> He begged Lotze’s patience for the slow proceedings, so customary in academic affairs.

Rather than complying with Wagner’s request, Lotze put off the entire business. In his next letter to Wagner, written December 12, 1843, he told him that he could not answer immediately, because he was travelling the very next day to Zittau, then on to Dresden, and only at the end of the holidays could he perhaps give an answer.<sup>87</sup> Dresden! A trip there could mean only one thing: that Lotze was going to see Wietersheim, the Saxon Minister of Culture, to talk about his position in Leipzig. Lotze, it seemed, was attempting to strengthen his bargaining position. Knowing that Wagner could foresee this, Lotze now had to play a very delicate game. Somehow, he had to keep Wagner’s interest in him and prevent him from becoming discouraged; there was a real danger that Wagner would drop the game entirely. So Lotze reassured Wagner that he would keep his discussions about the Göttingen position confidential.

Wagner was indeed alarmed. It seemed all his efforts to recruit Lotze would come to nothing, and that he would be look foolish before his superiors for trying so hard to buy him. On December 22 he wrote Hoppenstedt, telling him how much he was troubled by Lotze’s last letter.<sup>88</sup> There was even more disturbing news: there was now an interest in Leipzig from Prussia. If they did not proceed quickly, they would perhaps have to make an offer of more than a thousand thalers!

<sup>85</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 151–153.

<sup>86</sup> Wagner to Lotze, December 17, 1843, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 153.

<sup>87</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 156.

<sup>88</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 155.

Sure enough, Lotze visited Wietersheim in Dresden, where he heard some encouraging news, which he soon conveyed to Wagner.<sup>89</sup> Wietersheim, who by now almost certainly heard through the grapevine about Göttingen, offered Lotze an increase in salary and the prospect of an extraordinary position in medicine. But Lotze was unsure about that prospect because of the old animosity of the medicine faculty. For that reason he told Wagner that Göttingen was still an attractive prospect. But again he begged for time. He could not suddenly break off ongoing negotiations with Wietersheim, who was proving so obliging. Clearly, though, Lotze was also hoping for even more from Wietersheim to strengthen his hand.

Finally, on January 28, Lotze laid down his terms.<sup>90</sup> Nothing less than an ordinary professorship and 800 thalers would bring him to Göttingen. There could be some flexibility on the salary, but any lesser amount would not compensate him for the loss of income from the fees and royalties he received in Leipzig. If he did not receive a formal offer from Göttingen within two weeks, he would be obliged to sign a contract with Wietersheim.

Wagner was flapped by Lotze's January 28 letter.<sup>91</sup> Lotze's demands would not have troubled him, since he had already been urging Göttingen to offer him an ordinary professorship with an 800 thaler salary. But the deadline would have disturbed him, because he could see that dispatch was now of the essence. If people in Göttingen did not act quickly, Lotze would slip out of their hands, if only by default. Immediately after receiving Lotze's letter, Wagner wrote Hoppenstedt, January 31, 1854, urging him to offer Lotze an ordinary professorship with a salary of 800 thalers.<sup>92</sup> It was now clear that nothing less would bring Lotze to Göttingen. Agreeing with Wagner, Hoppenstedt wrote Strahlenheim two days later to urge him to make an official offer under just those conditions.<sup>93</sup> He then told Hoppenstedt that if they were to offer him much less, Leipzig would probably improve their offer, so that even a higher offer might be ineffective. Sure enough, February 20, 1844, more than a week after Lotze's deadline, Hoppenstedt wrote Lotze to offer him an ordinary professorship in Göttingen with a salary of 800 thalers.<sup>94</sup> Lotze's triumph was complete!

It has been said that Lotze's negotiations regarding the Göttingen position show him to be a "skillful manipulator".<sup>95</sup> A nimble negotiator he was indeed, but we should not see anything negative in that. After all, simple vanity never played that much of a role. Still living in poverty, Lotze was only struggling to get the best deal for

<sup>89</sup> Lotze to Wagner, January 23, 1844, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 158–159.

<sup>90</sup> Lotze to Wagner, January 28, 1844, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 160–161.

<sup>91</sup> Pester says that Wagner would have been troubled by Lotze's terms, and that he had brought the reputation of the university into question. See *Lotze*, 145. But this is not probable, because Wagner himself had urged the ministry to offer such terms in his December 8, 1843, letter to Hoppenstedt. Wagner would have been troubled by the urgency of the situation but not Lotze's demands.

<sup>92</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 162–163.

<sup>93</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 163–164.

<sup>94</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 167–168.

<sup>95</sup> See Woodward and Rainer, "Berufungskorrespondenz", 358.

himself, to provide the best means of earning a living for himself and his future family. It is difficult not to admire his tactics, how he could sustain the other party's interest while increasing his own hand. It is also difficult not to approve his triumph over administrators who were trying to have him on the cheap. And so, at the extraordinary age of 27, Lotze had managed to win for himself a chair at one of the most prestigious universities in Germany. From his perch in Göttingen, he was now set to exert the enormous influence he would soon have on German intellectual life.

# Aesthetics, Physiology, and Psychology (Göttingen 1844–1854)

## 1. Arrival in Göttingen and Neo-Romantic Aesthetics

In Easter 1844 Lotze arrived in Göttingen, the city that would be his home for the next thirty-seven years. He had to establish himself quickly, because his duties for the Summer Semester would begin in early May. New lectures had to be prepared, new lodgings had to be found, and new furnishings had to be bought for them. Judging from the few letters from this time, buying sofas and chairs was more a challenge than the foundations of psychology.<sup>1</sup> It was easy for him to write new lectures; but buying furniture seemed to be beyond him. He complained to Klara Fechner that his “poor head” was full of such matters as frames for sofas, springs for cushions, and the price of horsehair.

But Lotze had reason to be anxious about such domestic matters. In September he was due to marry, and so he had to get furnishings suitable for wife and family. After the wedding, which took place in Zittau, Ferdinande came with Lotze to Göttingen. For once, Lotze said he was a happy man.<sup>2</sup> By all accounts the marriage was very successful,<sup>3</sup> the source of comfort and stability for Lotze, who was prone to hypochondria, melancholy and debilitating headaches. Together the couple had four sons: Konrad (b. 1846), Ludwig (b. 1849), Robert (b. 1858), and Rudolf (b. 1853). Though Rudolf died young, Konrad, Ludwig and Robert had successful careers as doctors and lawyers.

Lotze’s first lectures in Göttingen were on pure and applied logic, and the history of philosophy since Kant. Usually, he had to lecture twelve hours a week, not to mention attend disputations for doctoral dissertations. Sometimes he would have to be at the podium by seven in the morning. It was probably because of these heavy lecture duties that Lotze did not also give seminars; he did, however, reserve Tuesday evenings for a social hour, which was his only opportunity to mingle with

<sup>1</sup> See Falckenberg, *Lotze*, 24–25. Falckenberg describes the content of the letters, most of which have been since lost.

<sup>2</sup> See Lotze to Gustav Theodor and Clara Fechner, December 7, 1844, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 183.

<sup>3</sup> See Wentscher, *Lotze*, 103–104.

his students.<sup>4</sup> Given such a workload, Lotze sometimes found it all too much. No wonder he suffered headaches! Sometimes, in the early mornings, Ferdinande would have to encourage him: “Pull yourself together; you can do it!”<sup>5</sup>

Though at first pleased about Göttingen, Lotze soon became dissatisfied there, grumbling to his old friends about the town and university. Shortly after leaving Leipzig, he began to long for the good old days there. His attitude toward his new abode he summarized in a letter to Hermann Härtel in early 1846: “Like Iphigenia, I can say of Göttingen: ‘Never will my spirit reside here.’”<sup>6</sup> It seemed he liked nothing about the place. It was provincial, dirty and ugly, the streets filled with beggars and proletariat. The students did not impress him: most of them were future jurists, philologists and theologians, who were no more inclined to philosophy than those in Leipzig.<sup>7</sup> Worst of all, the intellectual life in the university was moribund. There was little interaction among the faculty, and there was little tolerance toward those whose thinking was not *status quo*. The stifling conservative atmosphere of the place oppressed him. Even in the 1840s Göttingen had not recovered from Ernst August’s reactionary policies and the expulsion of its seven luminaries.

At least in his early years in Göttingen, Lotze did try to change things. He joined a group of young intellectuals intent on reinvigorating the intellectual climate, the so-called *Freitagsgesellschaft*. On Friday evenings they would meet to discuss philosophy, poetry and politics, and sometimes essays were written for the meetings. Lotze edited two anthologies of these essays.<sup>8</sup> He also wrote two essays, both of them on aesthetics, his 1845 *Ueber den Begriff der Schönheit* and his 1847 *Ueber Bedingungen der Kunstschönheit*.<sup>9</sup> These essays, the first significant writings of Lotze’s Göttingen years, contain *in nuce* his entire philosophy of art.

It was perhaps inevitable that Lotze, upon first opportunity, would turn his attention toward aesthetics. The subject had never been far from his thoughts. In Zittau he corresponded with Hämmel about literary questions; and in Leipzig he attended Weiße’s lectures on aesthetics. Still, he could not pursue his interests, which had been stifled by the pressing demands of teaching metaphysics and medicine. But now in Göttingen Lotze hit upon a happy strategy of mixing duty with pleasure: he would give lectures on the subject. *Docendo discimus!* And so, starting in the Summer Semester of 1845,

<sup>4</sup> See Wentscher, *Lotze*, 109.

<sup>5</sup> See Julius Baumann, “Persönliche Erinnerungen an Hermann Lotze”, *Annalen der Naturphilosophie* 8 (1909), 177.

<sup>6</sup> *Briefe und Dokumente*, 187. The citation is from Goethe’s *Iphigenia*. On the source see 189n2.

<sup>7</sup> See Lotze to Theodor and Clara Fechner, December 7, 1844, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 183; and to Hermann Härtel, January or February 1846, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 187.

<sup>8</sup> *Göttingen Studien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1845, 1847). On Lotze’s role as editor, see Pester, *Lotze*, 153.

<sup>9</sup> Both essays were published in the *Göttingen Studien*, 67–125 and 73–150 respectively; they were reprinted in *Kleine Schriften*, I, 291–341 and II, 205–272. Both were also published separately, *Begriff der Schönheit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1845) and *Ueber Bedingungen der Kunstschönheit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1847). All references in parentheses above are to these separate publications.



he would regularly lecture on aesthetics.<sup>10</sup> The subject would continue to preoccupy him in later years. In addition to the essays for the *Freitagsgesellschaft*, Lotze published in 1868 a major work on aesthetics, his *Geschichte der Aesthetik in Deutschland*, a vast survey of German aesthetics since Baumgarten, which was based on some of his lectures.<sup>11</sup>

It should be no surprise that aesthetics was so important for Lotze. It had been of vital importance to the entire romantic generation, for whom cultural and spiritual renewal rested on the inspiring powers of art. The romantics taught that art can give us the deepest insight into reality, that the end of existence is to make our lives a work of art, and that the universe itself is a living aesthetic whole. Lotze, as a late romantic, never lost that faith. Although it was not apparent in his later Leipzig years, in either the *Metaphysik* or *Logik*, it still lay deep but dormant in all his thinking. The task now was to vindicate it, to demonstrate it from a philosophical perspective.

Vindication was indeed a timely task. For by the early 1840s the romantic worldview was becoming a rapidly fading memory. Gone were the happy and heady days in Weimar and Jena when the young romantics first proclaimed their faith in art. If that aesthetic *credo* were to survive in the new scientific age, it would have to be defended against its many detractors. Since the 1830s romantic doctrine had been assaulted from four distinct directions.

- One challenge came from “the scientific outlook” itself, i.e., that view of the world for which the real is only what we can measure and calculate, and for which all phenomena (viz., colors, sounds, smells, tastes, feels) are mere appearances in the mind. The classic statement of this outlook was Descartes’s and Locke’s distinction between primary and secondary qualities; Kant never questioned it but simply reformulated it in terms of his transcendental idealism.
- Another assault came from Herbart’s formalist aesthetics, which stressed the fundamental role of formal structure in aesthetic experience.<sup>12</sup> Inspired by the new psychology and physiology, Herbart aimed to identify through observation and experiment certain “basic forms” that give people pleasure; from their combination he would then explain the more subtle and sophisticated pleasures involved in works of art. Very much the ancestor of “new criticism” and modern formalism, Herbart insisted that aesthetic pleasure should be limited to what is internal

<sup>10</sup> On these lectures, see Eduard Rehnisch, “Zur Biographie Hermann Lotzes”, 107–112. In 1884 Rehnisch published notes from his lectures under the title *Grundzüge der Ästhetik* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1884).

<sup>11</sup> *Geschichte der Aesthetik in Deutschland* (Munich: Cotta, 1868).

<sup>12</sup> Herbart puts forward such an aesthetics several works: *Allgemeine praktische Philosophie* (1808), *Werke* II, 347; *Lehrbuch zur Einleitung in die Philosophie* (1813), *Werke* IV, 105–145, §§72–94; and *Kurze Enzyklopädie der Philosophie* (1831), *Werke* IX, 78–125, §§77–147. It is not clear which work Lotze read or had in mind; as usual, Lotze scarcely cites his sources; he refers only to the last work, though it does not entirely represent the views he attributes to Herbart. The account of Herbart’s aesthetics given above reflects more how Lotze understood Herbart than Herbart himself, who gave a fundamental role to aesthetics in his practical philosophy and pedagogics.

and intrinsic to a work of art, which, he claimed, is its form alone; since all content involves only the ideas we associate with the work, it is irrelevant to its aesthetic worth. The Herbartians celebrated this new “scientific” direction as the future of aesthetics, as a salutary and necessary break with “idealist” aesthetics, which had bogged down the entire field in metaphysics.

- Still another enemy came not from the realm of science but from that of speculation. From 1835 to 1838 Gustav Heinrich Hotho, a loyal follower of Hegel, had published his master’s lectures on aesthetics, which would now spread its attack on romanticism far and wide.<sup>13</sup> Although Hegel, by holding beauty to the sensible appearance of the idea, continued to affirm the cognitive status of aesthetic experience, he also placed art on a level below philosophy. Aesthetic experience could see truth only through the dark glass of intuition and feeling, whereas philosophy could grasp it through the clear medium of the concept. Adding insult to injury, Hegel then went on to preach his notorious doctrine of “the end of art”, which was his way of saying that romanticism was dead and that the time had now come for philosophy, specifically *his* philosophy. In the 1840s there were still enough Hegelians around for such ideas to be a serious threat.<sup>14</sup>
- Last but not least, there was the growth of a new neo-classicism. This neo-classicism goes back to Schiller’s and Goethe’s collaboration in the 1790s, when the literary lions of Weimar began reading Aristotle and writing dramas in classical form. Rigor and restraint were the new order of the day, the proper medicine against the extravagance and self-indulgence of Friedrich Schlegel and his circle. Schiller and Goethe set a powerful precedent, and soon they had their following. Many were the voices raised in protest against the corrupt gothic taste of “the new” or “romantic” movement.<sup>15</sup> This new neo-classical sensibility found its rallying cry in Goethe’s famous dictum: “the classic is the healthy, the romantic the sick”.<sup>16</sup> The polemics against the romantics only increased in the 1830s and 1840s among the protagonists of *Neues Deutschland*—Heinrich Heine, Arnold Ruge and Theodor Echtermeyer—who associated romanticism with the cause of political reaction.

Of all these challenges Lotze was well aware. His aesthetics is best described as neo-romantic, for it is essentially a response to them. Never does Lotze himself explicitly describe his aesthetics in such terms; but, when we consider its content and context,

<sup>13</sup> Gustav Heinrich Hotho, ed., *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegels Vorlesungen über Aesthetik* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1835–1838), 3 vols.

<sup>14</sup> Thus Lotze would complain in 1848 about the domination of aesthetics by Hegelians. See his review of Johann Koosen’s *Propädeutik der Kunst* in *Kleine Schriften* II, 352.

<sup>15</sup> On these polemics, see Ernst Behler, *Frühromantik* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992), 22–27.

<sup>16</sup> In *Gespräche mit Eckermann*, April 2, 1829, in *Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche*, ed. Ernst Beutler (Zurich: Artemis, 1948–1971), XXIV, 332.

there cannot be any doubt about his underlying romantic allegiances.<sup>17</sup> In his two essays for the *Freitagsverein* Lotze defends three theses central to and characteristic of romanticism: that art gives us insight into reality itself, that art stands above philosophy in its power to reveal truth, and that gothic art and taste is superior to classical. The first thesis is directed against “the scientific outlook” and Herbart’s formalism, the second against Hegelianism, the third against neo-classicism.

In *Ueber den Begriff der Schönheit* Lotze immediately takes up the challenge to the romantic faith in the cognitive status of art. According to our naive view of the world, he writes, we think of objects as having aesthetic properties just like all sense qualities, viz., colors and sounds. We assume that the object is beautiful in itself, apart from how we happen to perceive it. But “the scientific view of things” teaches us that the content of sensation does not resemble anything like the object itself (7). In that case, beauty seems even further from the truth than most normal sense qualities, for beauty depends not only on sensation but also on the feeling of pleasure, which is even more obviously not an objective quality of things. We should not introduce into aesthetics the old realistic conception of truth, Lotze argues, according to which sensations somehow resemble the qualities of the objects that cause them (19–21).<sup>18</sup> If this were to be the standard of knowledge, we would have to admit that aesthetic experience, like all sensation, cannot give us knowledge of reality at all. Although Lotze was troubled by a subjectivism in aesthetics that would place beauty solely in the mind of the beholder, he still approved of a fundamental principle of Kant’s critical philosophy: that what we know of objects is very much the result of what our knowing activity puts into them. This Kantian principle, he argues in his *Geschichte der Aesthetik*, is incontestable and should be the starting point for all modern aesthetics (65).

Assuming, however, we accept this Kantian principle, how do we sustain the claim to truth of aesthetic experience? Why not simply abandon it and accept the hard fact that aesthetic experience is only about feelings of pleasure? Lotze refuses to surrender this claim because it would mean denying a common intuition or feeling that people have about aesthetic experience: namely, that beauty speaks to them, that it has a message for them, that it gives them insight into themselves and the world. We all share the belief that the artist is giving us a glimpse of the meaning of existence, that he is showing us something about “the deep content of life” (*den tiefen Gehalt des Lebens*).<sup>19</sup> Rather than dismissing or denying these intuitions or feelings, the task of aesthetics is

<sup>17</sup> This neo-romantic agenda appears more or less explicitly in Lotze’s review of Joseph von Eichendorff’s *Über die ethische und religiöse Bedeutung der neueren romantischen Poesie in Deutschland* (Leipzig: Liebeskind, 1847). Lotze sympathized with Eichendorff’s romantic heritage, though not his Catholic sympathies, and called for a revival of the sensibilities “once possessed with such intensity by the now spurned romantics” (344). Lotze’s review first appeared in 1848 in the *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeigen*. Stück 13, 133–136. Reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* III/1, 341–344.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Geschichte der Aesthetik*, 66.

<sup>19</sup> *Ueber Bedingungen der Kunstschönheit*, 20.

to explain them, indeed to justify them. They are just as much a valid starting point of aesthetics as the Kantian principle.

But now we have some explaining to do: for how do we square the Kantian principle with these intuitions and feelings? To resolve this antinomy, Lotze demands that we re-think what is meant by “truth” in aesthetic experience. His attempt to explain such truth, though obscure and inchoate, is also suggestive and interesting, and indeed perhaps his chief contribution to aesthetics.

Lotze now applies his distinction between meaning and existence, which he had already used in his physiology, to his aesthetics. Truth, Lotze writes in *Ueber den Begriff der Schönheit*, is not about the resemblance between a representation and reality but about the content of our representations themselves (19–21). We call the order of our representations true, he explains, if it has a meaning or sense (*Bedeutung*) (24). Then, using a redolent term later appropriated by Frege, he calls the meaning or sense behind a work of art its “thought” (*Gedanke*): “...with this word the German languages designates better than the borrowed foreign word ‘idea’ a content whose sole coherent core consists in having a sense, meaning or value” (24). He uses the terms “sense”, “meaning” and “value” loosely and interchangeably. Whatever their precise meaning, Lotze’s general position seems to be that aesthetic experience gives us insight not into a realm of facts, as the empirical sciences do, but into a realm of meaning and value. What is characteristic of an aesthetic view of the world, he later wrote in his *Geschichte der Aesthetik*, is that it embodies all our fundamental values.<sup>20</sup>

Yet this too only seems to push the problem back another step. For we might well ask: How does value and meaning give knowledge of reality? This world of meaning and value might be a strictly human world, a construction of human beings in their attempts to interact and communicate with one another; it need not have any connection with the universe outside them. The truth of art would then be a purely *human* truth, i.e., truth as it is lived and experienced by human beings and nothing more. Lotze, however, makes a much greater claim for the truth of aesthetic experience. He thinks that through beauty we have insight not only into ourselves but into the very heart of the world itself. “Beauty”, he writes, is “what properly penetrates the living core of all being” (21), and it is indeed what allows us to grasp “the meaning of the world as a whole” (52–53). What could possibly justify such a grand claim?

To answer this question we need to return to the “teleological idealism” of Lotze’s 1841 *Metaphysik*, which provides the background for much of his argument.<sup>21</sup> According to that idealism, the entire universe is governed by ends, and these ends

<sup>20</sup> *Geschichte der Aesthetik*, 405.

<sup>21</sup> Lotze does not refer explicitly to his *Metaphysik* in the aesthetic essays; however, its importance is plain throughout. The role of teleology appears explicitly in *Ueber Bedingungen der Kunstschönheit* where Lotze argues that there are not only physical and psychological but also metaphysical conditions of beauty. These metaphysical conditions consist in nothing less than “the general plan of the world” (*den Plan der Weltordnung*) (17–18). See also *Ueber den Begriff der Schönheit* where Lotze explains that all reality is governed by ends and analyzes the elements involved in the completion of an end (27).

are realized only within the realm of human meaning and value. All of nature forms a hierarchy according to the degree in which these purposes are realized, and their highest degree of organization and development lies within the human realm. Here Lotze was re-invoking an older romantic doctrine, the thesis of Schelling in his *System des transcendentalen Idealismus*, according to which the creativity of the artist is the culmination of the cosmos itself.<sup>22</sup> What we feel and perceive about the universe through art is true, therefore, because it is nothing less than nature reaching *its* self-awareness through us. If this doctrine was old, it was not naive or antiquated, at least in Lotze's view, because it had been vindicated by the teleological idealism of his *Metaphysik*.

We can now understand why Lotze's insistence on the subjectivity of experience, his acceptance of the Kantian starting point, does not undercut the claim for the cognitive status of art. Although he insists that the significance of beauty is subjective, that it belongs essentially to the world of human culture, he also holds that human experience is the purpose of nature, the realization of its fundamental powers or energies. Lotze could uphold the Kantian starting point, then, only by taking issue with Kant's own underlying dualisms and by upholding the old idealist principle of the identity of subject and object: that nature is visible spirit, that spirit is visible nature.<sup>23</sup>

Intent as he was on overcoming Kantian dualisms, Lotze had to watch another dualism all his own: that between the realm of value and fact. Aware of this very problem, he stresses that aesthetic experience concerns the realm of fact and reality just as much as that of value and meaning. Beauty is not simply an attribute of ideas or archetypes but also of the particular sensible things that illustrate or instantiate them. Lotze's more considered view is that beauty is the *reconciliation* between ideal and reality, the *synthesis* of value and fact. Beauty reveals, he claims, the greatest marvel and mystery of them all: that there can be union of such heterogeneous realms! There are two fundamental presuppositions of aesthetic experience: that the realms of value and fact are opposed to one another, *and* that they are reconcilable with one another, so that that ideals can become reality and values can become fact (29–30). Beauty, Lotze argues, would have no meaning in a world where ideals immediately became reality, nor in a world where they were never realized at all (31). It is an entirely contingent matter that in our life ideals are realized or that values are achieved. Aesthetic experience, as Kant so well understood, is very much about the pleasure of discovering that these ideals and values somehow come together at some times and places.

Since the reconciliation of value and fact in beauty is a contingent matter, something that happens by chance and only in some times and places, Lotze insists on calling it an "event" or "happening" (*eines Geschehens*) (23). "The true and highest field of beauty is the world of events, not that of forms." (47) It is not just any event or happening within us, of course, but one that has a sense or meaning, and so Lotze calls

<sup>22</sup> In his *Geschichte der Aesthetik*, 125, Lotze paid handsome tribute to Schelling. He praised his concept of nature as a work of art, and his insight that beauty reveals the primal ground of reality.

<sup>23</sup> Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*, *Werke* II, 706.

it more precisely “the form of an event” (*Gestalt eines Geschehens*) or “the meaning of an event” (*der Sinn eines Geschehens*) (25). His point in defining beauty as an event was partly to stress the contingency of beauty, but also partly to counteract the persistent tendency in German aesthetics to intellectualize beauty, to place it in the archetypical world removed from the world of becoming. The fundamental shortcoming of German aesthetics from Baumgarten down to Hegel, Lotze believed, was that it tended to overestimate the intellectual side of beauty, as if the sensible and particular were only a limit upon it and not an equal and essential element.<sup>24</sup>

Nowhere is the influence of the romantic legacy on Lotze more evident than in his insistence that aesthetic experience alone reveals the unity of ideal and reality, value and fact. This had been a defining doctrine of the early romantics, of Schelling, Hölderlin and Novalis, who valued the insights of art above those of philosophy. Hegel had attempted to go beyond them with his dialectic, which would establish this unity through concepts and reasoning rather than intuitions and feelings. But, having already exposed the errors of dialectic in his *Metaphysik*, Lotze had his reasons for doubting that Hegel had gotten beyond his romantic forebears. Like a true romantic, he questioned the power of philosophy, the medium of discursive thought, to grasp the unity of ideal and real. In *Ueber die Bedingungen der Kunstschönheit* he reaffirms the romantic view that the poet can grasp through intuition and feeling what the philosopher cannot comprehend by concepts or reasoning (20). While the philosopher had to lay down his weapons (concepts, judgments and syllogisms) and stand dumb before the grand mystery of life—the unity of the ideal and real—the poet could see through it. How? Easy, Lotze replies. The artist needs only to get to work, to create something. There in his work lies the unity of form and content, ideal and reality, value and fact. It is just a fact that there is this unity, even though we cannot explain it. Art was thus the solution to the mystery of the universe (20). The artist did not have to discover truth for the simple reason that he could create it.

An astonishing and bold claim! Surely, one that raised more questions than it answered. For how is such insight possible? What gives the artist the power to penetrate the veil of maya? What did he have that the philosopher lacked? Lotze was ready with an answer, crude and sketchy though it might be. What gave the artist such power, he explained, was his feeling and imagination, his ability to put himself in the place of things different from himself.<sup>25</sup> Sympathy for other beings, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate, was the instrument by which the artist could penetrate into the very heart of things. Having an aesthetic sense, a feeling for beauty, is very much a matter of sympathy, Lotze believed, of having the power to enter imaginatively into the life and standpoint of another. The inner strivings of things, their struggles and aspirations, would have no meaning for us if we could not feel them ourselves, if we could not project ourselves into them. The problem with the philosopher is not

<sup>24</sup> See *Geschichte der Aesthetik*, 12, 139, 142, 148–150, 190.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Ueber den Begriff der Schönheit*, 20 and *Ueber Bedingungen der Schönheit*, 8–10.

only that he depreciates feeling and imagination, but that he also stands aloof and detached from his object; his is a third person standpoint, which treats things as if they were dead; the artist, however, has the power to enter into their inner life, re-creating in himself the same feelings and strivings of the object. Lotze thinks that the artist extends his sympathy not only to other human beings but to nature itself. But how do we feel sympathy for rocks and trees? Such claims seem less extravagant once placed in the context of Lotze's metaphysics: for it holds that all matter consists in a *nisus*, an inner striving, and that feeling is the most basic form of awareness and life. The artist understands that inner striving by his imagination, by putting himself in the place of all things. Through feeling alone does he understand that which has feeling.

It was Lotze's reappraisal of feeling in aesthetic experience that made him question Herbart's formalism. Herbart's aesthetics was for him just another instance of the classical mistake of all German aesthetics: the overemphasis on the role of the intellect at the expense of sensibility. Herbart saw the core of aesthetic experience in the perception of pure forms alone, as if feelings were only a distraction. It was as if the purest aesthetic experience would be entirely intellectual, involving no feelings at all. Lotze doubts, however, that we can understand the meaning of form in a work of art without feelings. To understand the consonances and dissonances of music, the stresses and strains of loads in architecture, for example, we must have some feeling of what it means to push and pull, to struggle and exert ourselves, to overcome resistance and to submit to superior force. Here again sympathy plays an important role in aesthetic experience, because we derive pleasure from the perception of form when we have the power to sympathize with it, to place ourselves inside it. If an object cannot evoke that sympathy from us, we enjoy it all the less.<sup>26</sup> The artificiality of Herbart's aesthetic, Lotze argues, comes from his attempt to separate aesthetic pleasure from all feeling.<sup>27</sup> If it is difficult to distinguish aesthetic perception from the pleasure we take in it, it is even more difficult to make sense of pleasure without feeling. For would a purely intellectual being, one having no desires at all, have pleasures? Least of all was Lotze happy with Herbart's attempt to distinguish form from content. Herbart wanted the perception of form alone to be aesthetic, since form alone is intrinsic to a work, whereas content concerns whatever we read into the work according to our values and beliefs. For Lotze, however, the value of an artwork depends very much on the interpretations that we read into it; the artwork is not an entity in itself apart from the various ways in which it can be interpreted. The pleasure that we take in it very much depends upon the interpretations that we bring to bear upon it.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Lotze makes these criticisms of formalism in the first section of *Ueber Bedingungen der Kunstschönheit*, 6–12. Though he does not mention Herbart by name, he almost certainly had him in mind. His explicit critique of Herbart appears in Book I, chapter 9, of his *Geschichte der Aesthetik*, 225–246. Lotze later criticized formalist aesthetics in his review of Eduard Hanslick's famous *Vom musikalisch-Schönen* (Leipzig: Weigel, 1854). His review appeared 1854 in the *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeigen* Stück 106–108 (1855), 1049–1068. Reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* III/1, 200–214.

<sup>27</sup> This argument is more explicit in the later *Geschichte der Aesthetik*, 238–239.

<sup>28</sup> *Geschichte der Aesthetik*, 229–231, 233, 244, 407.

In most of the *Freitagsverein* essays Lotze discusses purely theoretical questions. But here and there he makes his own aesthetic taste be known; and then it is striking how romantic it is, how much of it is a defense of gothic and a jab at neo-classical taste. Lotze pays his respects to classical art, which he sincerely admires. He praises Greek art, especially its sculpture, architecture and drama for having an admirable sense of regularity, restraint and proportion. Yet the neo-classicist is also firmly put into his place. The highest demands of art, Lotze opines, are not fulfilled by Greek works.<sup>29</sup> Order, simplicity and serenity are nice; but they are also not enough. Too much of them restrains the imagination and impoverishes the spirit. The imagination needs to roam, and the heart needs to feel, and those works that give room for the imagination and stimulus for sympathy are better. Compare a Greek temple with a Gothic cathedral. The simplicity and regularity of the temple leaves us cold; but the Gothic cathedral, with its vaulting ceilings and spires, leaves us in wonder. The temple's regularity constrains the imagination; but the cathedral's elaborate designs and secret passageways sets it free.<sup>30</sup> In the end, the choice between classical or gothic is that between "beautiful abundance" (*schöne Fülle*) and "beautiful poverty" (*schöne Armut*).<sup>31</sup> Such was Lotze's rejoinder to Goethe's maxim.

Having vindicated Gothic taste, the cognitive status of art and its superiority over philosophy, Lotze had to repulse only one more assaulting force to break the siege against the romantic fortress: the Hegelian thesis of the end of art. He had already learned how to question that thesis from Weiße, who had challenged it by defending the possibility of "modern art".<sup>32</sup> The tacit premise behind Hegel's thesis, Lotze argued, was a doctrine that he had inherited from Schelling: that the basic form of art is myth.<sup>33</sup> Since myth will not work in modern culture, Hegel inferred, perfectly correctly from his premise, that art has no future. But, Lotze insisted, we need not accept that premise in the first place. Conflating art with myth is untenable, not only because it limits art down to the classical world, but also because it confines it to poetry, which is only one form of art. What about music and architecture? Following Weiße, Lotze believed in the possibility of a new modern form of art, one superior to that of the classical and Christian worlds. What is characteristic of modern art, what places it above the classical and Christian, is its greater understanding of beauty. Rather than subordinating art to the needs of religion or the state, as the ancient Greeks and Christians had done, it would love art for its own sake. It would understand beauty in all its "purity" and "universality": in its purity, because it would refuse to make it a

<sup>29</sup> *Ueber Bedingung der Kunstschnheit*, 27.

<sup>30</sup> *Ueber Bedingung der Kunstschnheit*, 64.

<sup>31</sup> *Ueber Bedingung der Kunstschnheit*, 26.

<sup>32</sup> Christian Hermann Weiße, *System der Ästhetik als Wissenschaft von der Idee der Schönheit* (Leipzig: Hartmann, 1830), I, 301–320, §§39–40.

<sup>33</sup> See *Geschichte der Aesthetik*, 395–396. Though this work did not appear until 1868, Lotze puts forward his argument in the context of a discussion of Weiße's views, which he would have known since his student days in Leipzig.



servant of morality and religion; and in its universality, because it would free art from the needs of a particular nation or epoch.

Toward the close of *Über den Begriff der Schönheit* Lotze sketched his own optimistic theory of the epochs of art history (55–60), a theory meant to be the alternative to Hegel's pessimism about the future of art. There have been so far in history, he explains, two predominant "aesthetic worldviews".<sup>34</sup> One is the ancient worldview of the Greeks, which celebrated nature and found satisfaction in life in this world. The other is the medieval or Christian, which was devoted to an infinite ideal and sought happiness beyond this world. We are now in a moment of transition, Lotze implies, moving away from these older worldviews and toward a third one. We cannot go back now to the ancient or medieval worldviews, because they were based on a terrocentric cosmology, now rendered obsolete by modern science. The new infinite universe of modern science makes it impossible to feel at home in this world or to get beyond it. What we need instead is a new aesthetic worldview, one that is more universal than the Greeks, and one that is more accepting of life on earth than the Christians. Just what kind of worldview this would be, and what kind of art would be appropriate to it, Lotze does not explain; but it is clear that saying anything more would have amounted to prophecy. The whole point of the account was to sketch a possibility, to leave out hope for the future, for a new form of art that would not be mythology yet adequate to the science of the modern world.

## 2. Principles of Physiology

The first major work of Lotze's Göttingen years was his *Allgemeine Physiologie des Koerperlichen Lebens*, which appeared in 1851.<sup>35</sup> The purpose of this work, as Lotze explains in the preface, was entirely pedagogical. It was intended as a general introduction to physiology and as a compendium for students. In the self-advertisement for the work Lotze even expressly disavowed its claim to be philosophical.<sup>36</sup> A work devoted to the content of physiology, he explained, could not investigate in depth the foundations of its ultimate principles. Sure enough, some two thirds of the *Allgemeine Physiologie*, Books II and III, is devoted to a discussion of contemporary research in physiology.

It would be a mistake, however, to take Lotze's disclaimers too seriously. Though intended as a compendium, and though most of its content concerns empirical details, the *Allgemeine Physiologie* is still Lotze's best statement so far of his philosophy of physiology. Its first three chapters, all of Book I, provide a clear and concise account of his

<sup>34</sup> Lotze introduces the concept of an "aesthetic worldview" only in his *Geschichte der Aesthetik*, 396–405. But it seems the best concept to explain his meaning in his earlier work.

<sup>35</sup> *Allgemeine Physiologie des Koerperlichen Lebens* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1851). All references in parentheses are to the page numbers of this, the only, edition.

<sup>36</sup> 'Selbstanzeige der Allgemeine Physiologie des körperlichen Lebens', *Göttingen gelehrten Anzeigen*, Stück 100–102 (1851), 993–1016. Reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* II, 512–530.

general philosophical position regarding the life sciences. Ambiguities are resolved, inconsistencies removed, and principles clearly stated. Though Lotze would complain about the tedium and difficulty in spelling things out for his students, his pain was the reader's gain.

The first chapter of Book I discusses three approaches to nature, the ideal, mechanical and teleological. Lotze argues that they are not conflicting but complementary, that an adequate and complete philosophy should combine all three. By analyzing each of these views, and how they are meant to fit together, we get a very good conspectus of Lotze's metaphysics of nature.

- The ideal view sees nature from an aesthetic standpoint. It sees particular phenomena as instances of a universal form, idea or pattern. It ascribes "meaning" or "significance" to phenomena and does not view them simply as shapes or motions. Since this meaning or significance is not something that we can observe or measure, it cannot be proven or disproven by scientific investigation (19). For the same reason, we should not appeal to ideas, forms or patterns to explain particular phenomena; they cannot show us how something works, the particular causes that produce it (48). True to his romantic leanings, Lotze admits to a fondness for this way of viewing nature, which he says contains "a good part of the truth" (13–14).
- The mechanical view explains everything in nature according to universal laws (37). These universal laws assume that there is a necessary connection between two classes of phenomena, though this necessity is not verifiable by experience (41). Observation and experiment attempt to isolate the precise factors within phenomena that are necessary to produce a given effect; and the goal is to provide a general formula that states how the quantity of one phenomenon co-varies with another (41–42). The purpose of such explanation is to explain only *how* something happens; but it does not attempt to explain *why* it happens, its purpose or goal. As in his earlier writings, Lotze continues to uphold the principle of universal mechanism. He insists that everything in nature, whether organic or inorganic, is, at least in principle, explicable mechanically. Organic phenomena as well as inorganic must obey the general laws of nature; any difference between these phenomena solely concerns their subordinate laws (38).
- The teleological view sees nature as purposive, as governed by some design. It is noteworthy that this view of nature is not the same as the ideal view, but only a specific form of it. The ideal view does not necessarily equate its idea or pattern with a purpose; it need not regard what happens as a means to an end (50). Noting how teleology has now been virtually banished from physiology, how it has become a "*Schreckbild*" to researchers in the field who are intent on mechanical explanation alone, Lotze still holds firm and stresses the heuristic value, indeed necessity, of teleological explanation (50). Without teleology, he argues, physiology would have made no progress at all (50–51). No one should

want to banish explanations like ‘The purpose of muscles is to enable movement’ or ‘The purpose of the heart is to circulate blood’ (51). Teleology is invaluable in the search for mechanical causes because it shows in what range of phenomena we should look for the causes, and it helps to bring together a number of causes into a coherent whole (49). Although we cannot know the ultimate purpose of the universe, we can still know something about the purposes of particular things, just as we can see more from the heights of lower mountains even though we cannot scale the highest peak (51–52).

How do these three views fit together? Lotze sees no conflict at all between the mechanical and teleological views (52). Although we cannot prove purposiveness directly, we can regard a purpose as the effect of a set of mechanical causes, so that these causes are then seen as means to an end (53). Although purposes are not causes themselves, they still allow us to see what happens as means to their ends (56). In that case, whatever we formulate in mechanical terms we can also formulate in teleological terms. There is a conflict between these forms of explanation if we insist that mechanism *alone* is a complete explanation, or if we assume that purposes are themselves causal factors or agents; but there is no need that we make either of these assumptions. If we wish, we can regard nature entirely as a mechanism without having to appeal to final causes at all (56).

Lotze argues that these views are not only compatible but complementary, and that they indeed form a whole. The teleological view unites the other two by allowing us to see the mechanism of nature as a means to an end, where the end is some ideal or pattern, the sense or meaning of the whole (56). The aesthetic view does not explain how things occur; the mechanical view does not explain why. The teleological view subordinates mechanism to the ideal by showing how it is a means to an end.

From everything Lotze has said so far, there seems no reason to think that he ascribes anything more than a heuristic value to teleology. It could be that teleology is only a fiction, an aid in giving us aesthetic enjoyment of nature, but having no objective correlate in reality. We have already seen how Lotze, in his earlier writings, seemed to vacillate over the constitutive or regulative status of teleology.<sup>37</sup> The *Allgemeine Physiologie* settles this doubt decisively in favor of the *constitutive* status of teleology, resolving any apparent inconsistency in his earlier exposition. This constitutive status becomes evident when Lotze declares that we have to regard ideas as “the creative power...that moves everything as their ultimate cause” (58). The ideas are not simply heuristic but genetic principles, the source of the very existence of the world and the entire system of its laws (59). The very existence of the world depends on the ideas, so that without them nothing would come into existence at all. This means that we have to see the whole mechanism of nature as a means to an end, as the manifestation or realization of ideas. There is still no conflict with naturalism, however, with

<sup>37</sup> See Part II, chapter 3, section 3, above.

the autonomy and integrity of mechanical explanation. For we can still explain anything *within* nature entirely mechanically; it's just that we cannot explain the *whole* of nature mechanically. We have to realize, as Lotze puts it, "the beginning of everything mechanical is not mechanical" (59). The explanation of the origin of nature itself demands that we have recourse to a supersensible ground of nature (60).

The main result of chapter one of the *Allgemeine Physiologie* is a ringing reaffirmation of the romantic worldview. For Lotze ends the chapter by stating his conviction that the entire universe is governed by "a single living idea" (59), thereby vindicating what he calls the "aesthetic view", according to which nature is a work of art. Behind Lotze's taxonomy of the different views of nature there lay another romantic trope. Like Schiller and Hölderlin, Lotze states that the aesthetic view of nature is characteristic of youth and the childhood of the human race, and that it is lost with later intellectual development as one learns to analyze phenomena into their parts and causes (13). But Lotze insists that we should strive to regain the holistic perspective. What was given to us in our youth we must strive to regain on a higher self-conscious and critical level in our maturity. The goal of all scientific explanation is to see the universe as a whole, not only inchoately and vaguely through feeling, as in our childhood, but clearly and distinctly through reason. Mechanism then becomes an instrument to help us to understand *how*, by what precise *means*, the idea is realized within the world.

As much as Lotze's romantic leanings resurface in the *Allgemeine Physiologie*, it would be still a mistake to think that he reaffirms romantic doctrine *tout court*. For Lotze often takes issue with romantic *Naturphilosophie*, and he continues to keep a distance from some of the old romantic ideas of his youth. Though some of these doubts and switherings would be overcome in later work,<sup>38</sup> they are in full force in *Allgemeine Physiologie*. Section §12 of chapter three even reads like a sustained effort at self-criticism. Here Lotze criticizes that "poetic view" of nature that would ascribe life to everything in nature, the very doctrine that he once espoused in his *Tautelmann*. While Lotze is still intent on upholding some aspects of the poetical view, he thinks that its champions have gone too far with the idea of panpsychism. In attributing life to inorganic or material things, they have expected too much of them, as if they too could be purposive and conscious (120). While it is possible that matter consists in monads or substantial souls, we still have no empirical evidence that it does so; and it is absurd to attribute to these monads or souls all the characteristics of living beings, as if they had intelligence and a will (121). Lotze is also very critical of the idea, which also appears in *Tautelmann*, that all of nature forms a single living being or *Weltseele*. The life of the whole, he insists, is only that existing in all its particular members (122). "Where nature has everywhere formed structures from particular independent parts, the whole cannot possess any power other than that resulting from its parts; a new subject, which they all have as a unity, cannot arise through the combined working

<sup>38</sup> See Part II, chapter 4, section 5, below.

of the parts, neither can the whole have an existence other than that which consists in the sum of its parts.” (122). The fundamental problem with *Naturphilosophie*, in Lotze’s view, is that it ascribes causal or active powers to ideas and purposes, as if they could somehow intervene directly in the mechanism of nature; this is to violate the autonomy of mechanical explanation, which he regards as a fundamental postulate of all empirical science. Although Lotze himself would ascribe causal power to the fundamental idea of nature, that was limited to the *creation* of nature and not to its inner workings after its creation.

The second and third chapters of Book I of the *Allgemeine Physiologie* are devoted to explaining the difference between organic and inorganic nature. Some sections of the second chapter, especially §§8–10, return to the topic of *Lebenskraft*, whose refutation was already a central theme of the earlier “Leben. Lebenskraft” article. Since these arguments are essentially a restatement of the earlier ones, they require no further exposition here. What is new in these chapters is Lotze’s clear, powerful and sustained critique of the common distinctions between the organic and inorganic. Because of their historical importance, these criticisms, directed against *Naturphilosophie* and modern biology alike, deserve separate mention.

- Some modern biologists, viz., Müller and Gmelin, find the distinguishing characteristics of living beings in their specific chemical structure. They maintain that matter consists in no more than binary compounds, whereas living things have ternary or quaternary compounds. But Lotze finds the basis for this view to be rather flimsy, resting on insufficient evidence and an artificial nomenclature. When we combine a base and an acid into a salt, we continue to regard it as composed of binary compounds; but we could also regard it as quaternary (78). There is also insufficient evidence that life arises from ternary and quaternary compounds, because no one has seen life arise from them alone (79). Lotze is not sanguine about the possibility of reproducing organisms from inorganic compounds for the simple reason that the equipment scientists now have is too primitive (82). But he does not rule out the possibility in principle, and thinks that it might indeed be possible in the future to reproduce very simple organisms (83). He later points out that there have been successful experiments to create algae from chemical means (141). In general, it is unwise to distinguish between life and non-life on the basis of the nature-artifice distinction, Lotze argues, because we do not know what artifices will later be built (140).
- Treviranus maintains that machines wear themselves down through work, whereas organisms maintain themselves through their activity. Lotze finds this distinction very misleading (106–7). The first claim is only partly true. Machines built by human artifice do wear themselves down; but the mechanical systems of nature, viz., the movements of the planets around the sun, sustain themselves by their movements. The second claim is completely false. Organisms are more like man-made machines, needing constant winding and a new impulse to function. After about seventy years, the human clock ceases to wind itself.

- One of the characteristic phenomena of life was often said to be irritability (*Reizbarkeit*). Apparently, organisms react to stimuli in ways that exceed the law of equality of action and reaction that holds for material things. Lotze points out, however, that irritability is not the simple phenomenon it appears to be (97–98). The law of the equality of action and reaction applies to the simple effects of simple powers. But the whole organism, upon which the stimulus acts, is no longer a simple power alone; it is the compound of many different powers, and so its reaction to a stimulus will not be simple either and will exceed the force upon it. Every stimulus that acts on the whole organism starts a chain of reactions within it, which do not depend on the stimulus alone but the forces in the body itself. If the reaction is not equal to the action of the stimulus alone, that is not because of some secret power of spontaneity within the organism but simply because of the complicated chemical and physical interactions taking place within it. All that the concept of irritability means in the final analysis, Lotze argues, is that the organism is not completely passive, but that it also actively determines how things act upon it; but that is a characteristic many inorganic things share with organic ones (99).
- It is a commonplace of *Naturphilosophie* that material beings are aggregates where the parts precede the whole and make it possible, whereas living beings are organisms where the whole precedes the parts and makes them possible. Lotze finds this distinction problematic on several grounds (110–12). While the activity of each part of an organism depends on the activity of all the other parts, the same is true of machines; and the parts of organisms, at least in their chemical constitution, are no less self-sufficient than the parts of machines. There is no reason to ascribe causal efficacy to the organism as a whole; the interaction of the parts is sufficient for producing the effects usually attributed to it. While the germ or seed contains the plan of the organism in the form of the interconnection of its parts, it does not act by itself but only when it is placed in the proper environment and conditions.

In the *Allgemeine Physiologie* Lotze reaffirms his position that there is no difference between organic and inorganic nature in their fundamental manner of activity (71, 115). Both conform to the general laws of nature, and both are mechanical in their operation. Nevertheless, they still follow different subordinate laws, or they are different kinds of machine. Living beings differ from non-living ones, he explains, in their specific manner of combining and using the forces of nature (116, 128). But how, precisely? In what different ways do they use these powers? Having rejected so many older distinctions, the onus was now upon Lotze to formulate some distinctions of his own.

Lotze finds the distinction between the organic and inorganic in two places. First, organic beings show *development*, i.e., they come into being or grow by an irreversible process, whereas inorganic beings come into being by a reversible process, i.e., they can be decomposed and recomposed (133). Second, inorganic beings can be in

equilibrium with their environment, whereas organic ones never find a complete equilibrium with it (130). While inorganic beings act within their environment in simple, stable and uniform ways, organic beings act within it in more complex, changing and diverse ways (136–137). Their more complex interaction with the environment derives from the fact that they need nourishment to survive. Lotze accepts the view that *intussusception*, i.e., taking in foreign matter and converting it into organic tissue, is a central characteristic of life, though he thinks that it is misunderstood if it means only a process of increasing substance or physical size; what is essential to this process, he insists, is that foreign matter is made to conform to the inner structure of an organism (139).

In his attempt to formulate the distinguishing features of life Lotze hits upon one idea that he finds especially fruitful for expressing and unifying these features (150–152). He only suggests this admittedly very metaphysical idea here, leaving its exposition and defense for a later occasion. According to this idea, the organic is a microcosm that manifests the ideal that governs the entire universe. While both inorganic and organic manifest the ideal, the inorganic reveals it only in a very vague and partial way, whereas the organic reveals it in clear and complete way. There is indeed a scale of perfection in the universe, according to the degree to which something manifests or reveals the ideal. Here Lotze stated, though only *en passant*, what will soon become the guiding theme and title of *Mikrokosmos*.

### 3. Foundations of Psychology

Having written in a few years, from 1841 to 1844, major works on logic, metaphysics, aesthetics, pathology and physiology, it is difficult to imagine that Lotze was not exhausted and empty. Why, indeed, not rest on one's laurels? What recognition was he lacking? After all, he now occupied Herbart's chair in Göttingen, one of the most prestigious in all Germany. Such, however, were Lotze's demons that, despite headaches, sleeplessness and hypochondria, despite a full schedule of academic duties and lectures, he pressed on; there were other worlds to conquer. Psychology was waiting for him! And so, in 1844, he published his first article on the subject, "Instinct", which appeared in Wagner's *Handwörterbuch der Physiologie*.<sup>39</sup> This was followed two years later with his more substantial article "Seele und Seelenleben", which he also wrote for Wagner's *Handwörterbuch*.<sup>40</sup> Finally, in 1852, only a year after the *Allgemeine Physiologie*, he published his chief work on psychology, another tome of six hundred pages, his *Medizinische Psychologie*.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> "Instinkt", *Handwörterbuch der Physiologie*, ed. Rudolph Wagner (Braunschweig: Vogt, 1844), II, 191–209. This article was later published in *Kleine Schriften* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1886), I, 221–250.

<sup>40</sup> "Seele und Seelenleben", *Handwörterbuch der Physiologie*, III, 142–264. Later published in *Kleine Schriften*, II, 1–204. All references to this article, designated "SS", are to this later edition.

<sup>41</sup> *Medizinische Psychologie* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1852). This work will be abbreviated as MP. It is divided into paragraphs ("§") and into sections (#).

Not that psychology was complete *terra incognita*. Lotze's move into the field was a natural progression from his earlier work on pathology and physiology. It was indeed all part and parcel of his general program for a *philosophical* medicine, whose chief goal was to treat a human being as a whole and from a general metaphysical perspective. Lotze's medical psychology would be what he called a "physiological psychology" or a "physiology of the soul", i.e., it would examine human psychology from the perspective of physiology, so that it would treat especially the relationship between mind and body.<sup>42</sup> In adopting such an approach Lotze was following in the footsteps of his mentors in Leipzig—Weber, Volkmann and Fechner—who had applied the methods of observation and experiment to the study of human perception and sensation. It was the task of his *Medizinische Psychologie*, as he explained in the foreword, to apply the results of that method to the investigation of the relationship between mind and body (v).

In his magisterial *A History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century* John Merz declared that "...modern psychology may be dated from the appearance of Lotze's writings."<sup>43</sup> This statement, a tribute from a former student, is as exaggerated as it is exuberant. Merz not only underestimated the work of Lotze's predecessors; he also went too far in putting his teacher in the forefront of a later development he would have disowned. In two respects Lotze's work was very different from the experimental psychology characteristic of the late nineteenth century. First, though Lotze wanted psychology to be a science, he refused to regard it as a "*natural science*" (*Naturwissenschaft*), a term that was for him co-extensive with the physical sciences. While he insisted that psychology be closely connected with physiology, he resisted its reduction to that discipline. He insisted instead that psychology be an autonomous science, having its own methods appropriate to the *sui generis* status of mental phenomena.<sup>44</sup> Second, Lotze never separated psychology from metaphysics, and he stressed instead that it must have a metaphysical foundation. Hence in the 'Selbstanzeige' of his *Medizinische Psychologie* he argued that experience by itself is blind, and that to become knowledge it requires "principles of judgment" found only in "the metaphysical knowledge of things."<sup>45</sup> So important was the metaphysical dimension of psychology to Lotze that the first third of the *Medizinische Psychologie* is devoted to an exposition of its fundamental philosophical principles. Such a disquisition was for him essential to a "philosophical medicine", whose task was to explain the place and purpose of man in the cosmos as a whole. It therefore

<sup>42</sup> See SS, II, 204. Lotze gave "*Physiologie der Seele*" as an alternative title to his *Medizinische Psychologie*.

<sup>43</sup> Merz, *History* II, 268. To be fair to Merz, he also notes how Lotze's psychology had been influenced by German idealism, III, 264. But even here Merz's statement is misleading because, in his two main writings on psychology, Lotze had little conception of the hermeneutical method characteristic of that tradition.

<sup>44</sup> See his review of W.F. Volkmann's *Grundriss der Psychologie*, *Kleine Schriften* III, 261–262, where Lotze stresses the value of developing "*Psychologie nach psychologischen Methode*."

<sup>45</sup> See *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, Stück 100, June 21 1852, 994. Reprinted in *Kleine Schriften zur Psychologie*, ed. Reinhardt Pester (Heidelberg: Springer, 1989), 236.



simply begs the question to complain, as Lange did, that Lotze mutilated his work by prefacing it with a long metaphysical disquisition.<sup>46</sup>

Having no generally accepted agenda, method or even subject matter, psychology in the middle of the nineteenth century was very much a discipline in flux. There were many competing conceptions of it, the result of conflicting philosophical principles. It is necessary to distinguish Lotze's medical version of psychology from three other forms that would appear later in the nineteenth century: the psychophysics of Fechner, the interpretative psychology of Dilthey, and the *Völkerpsychologie* of Lazarus and Steinthal. Lotze's psychology differs from all these later forms chiefly by its anthropological and metaphysical perspective, its intent to determine the place of man in the cosmos as a whole. It has a great affinity with Fechner's psychophysics, whose aim was to determine precise quantitative laws concerning the interaction between the mental and physical. The *locus classicus* of psychophysics is Fechner's *Elemente der Psychophysik*,<sup>47</sup> which appeared in 1860, only eight years after Lotze's *Medizinische Psychologie*. Both works grew out of the same Leipzig circle; both held that psychology should be based on experiment and observation; both affirmed that mental phenomena should be explained by subsuming them under general laws. Still, Lotze's psychology had an anthropological and metaphysical perspective absent from Fechner's psychophysics, which intended to avoid all metaphysics. It is fair to say that Lotze's psychology anticipated, and partly inspired, Dilthey's interpretative psychology, whose origins also go back to the 1860s,<sup>48</sup> though Lotze never developed the hermeneutic approach that was so important for Dilthey's account of meaning and value. Finally, Lotze's psychology did not have the social and historical perspective of Moritz's and Steinthal's *Völkerpsychologie*, which was an early form of what we now call social psychology.<sup>49</sup> Because of his medical starting point, Lotze's focus was more on the species as such rather than its specific social and historical forms. The distinguishing feature of Lotze's psychology, its anthropological and medical perspective, make it more a child of the eighteenth century, a product of "the science of man", whose origins go back to the Enlightenment.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Friedrich Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, Zweite Auflage (Iserlohn: Baedeker, 1875), II, 386.

<sup>47</sup> Gustav Fechner, *Elemente der Psychophysik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1860).

<sup>48</sup> On the origins of Dilthey's interpretative psychology and its debt to Lotze, see Michael Ermarth, *Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 95, 143, 183. The *locus classicus* of Dilthey's interpretative psychology was his *Ideen über eine beschreibende und zergliedernde Psychologie*, which would not appear until 1894. See Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften* V, 139–240.

<sup>49</sup> On *Völkerpsychologie*, see Ivan Kalmar, "The *Völkerpsychologie* of Lazarus and Steinthal and the Modern Concept of Culture", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48 (1987), 671–690; the main writings of Lazarus and Steinthal on *Völkerpsychologie* have been collected by Klaus Köhnke in the anthology, *Grundzüge der Völkerpsychologie und Kulturwissenschaft* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2003).

<sup>50</sup> Eighteenth century German anthropology has recently become the subject of intensive investigation. See, for example, Mareta Linden, *Untersuchungen zum Anthropologiebegriff des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1976); *Der ganze Mensch: Anthropologie und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Schings (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992); and *Anthropologie und Literatur um 1800*, eds. Jürgen Barkhoff and Eda Sagarra (Munich: Iudicium Verlag, 1992); Karl Fink, 'Storm and Stress Anthropology', *History of the Human Sciences* 6 (1993), 51–71; and *Anthropology and the German Enlightenment*, ed. Katherine Faulk (Leisburg: Bucknell, 1995).

To understand how Lotze saw psychology, we do best to examine his own attempts to define it. In the final section of “Seele und Seelenleben” and in chapter §14 of *Medizinische Psychologie*, he went to great pains to locate his own psychology in the intellectual landscape of his day.<sup>51</sup> Lotze saw his work as an attempt to mediate between two conflicting approaches: the realism of Herbart and the idealism of Hegel. The problem with these theories, Lotze contends, is that they had confused two very different kinds of question: that of existence and that of value or meaning (SS 175). The question of existence concerns what something consists in and by what laws it comes into being, i.e., the mechanism behind its development. The question of value or meaning concerns what purpose something fulfills or what ideal or norm it realizes. Any satisfactory psychology, Lotze believed, had to distinguish yet answer both kinds of question.

It was the grand project of Herbart’s 1824 *Psychologie als Wissenschaft* to make psychology a science having the same standards of rigor as the natural sciences.<sup>52</sup> Beginning from inner observation, the psychologist would formulate general laws determining precise quantitative relationships between mental phenomena. True to his mechanist ideal, Herbart stressed the importance of applying mathematics to psychic phenomena.<sup>53</sup> Psychology would become a science only insofar as it could express its results in a precise and determinate form. What allowed for the application of mathematics to mental life, Herbart argued, was the extensive quantitative dimension of psychic phenomena, viz., the degree of intensity of a representation, the length of a series of representations, the resistance and attraction between representations, the rapidity with which they appeared and disappeared in consciousness, and so on.<sup>54</sup> Though Lotze had no objection in principle to a mathematical psychology,<sup>55</sup> he did not believe that it could provide a full or sufficient account of mental life. There were for him three chief shortcomings with Herbart’s approach. First, it cannot explain the *qualitative* dimension of representations, and more specifically their *content*, i.e., what they mean (SS 179).<sup>56</sup> Second, it hypostasizes mental phenomena, treating them from a third-person perspective, as if they were physical phenomena; it therefore disregards the first-person perspective, i.e., the subject who has representations (SS 182). Third, Herbart’s quantification of mental phenomena was naive because it failed to see that what we quantify depends on our interpretation of the data (SS 183–184). In focusing on the quantitative aspects of mental life, but in ignoring the content of

<sup>51</sup> “Section VII: Aphorismen über psychologische Theorien”, 168–204. Cf. *Medizinische Psychologie* §14, 151–160.

<sup>52</sup> Herbart, *Psychologie als Wissenschaft neu gegründet auf Erfahrung, Metaphysik und Mathematik*, Werke V, 187, 189.

<sup>53</sup> *Psychologie als Wissenschaft*, V, 196; §7. See also his “Ueber die Möglichkeit und Nothwendigkeit Mathematik auf Psychologie anzuwenden”, *Sämtliche Werke* V, 91–122.

<sup>54</sup> Herbart, “Ueber die Möglichkeit”, V, 98, 107.

<sup>55</sup> “Seele und Seelenleben”, 183–184.

<sup>56</sup> This point is admitted by Herbart himself. See “Ueber die Möglichkeit”, V, 107.

representations and the subject behind them, Herbart had addressed the question of existence but he had neglected that of value or meaning.

Hegel's failing was just the opposite: while he answered the question of meaning, he had ignored that of existence. In the third part of his *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* Hegel had constructed a system of psychology according to the dimension of meaning or value.<sup>57</sup> His dialectical method had organized psychic phenomena according to their progressive realization of the idea. While Lotze praised Hegel for thus taking into account the realm of value, he believed that there were three fatal shortcomings to his method. First, Hegel could not deduce or construct the particularity and variety of mental phenomena from the idea. Second, he did not bother to explain the precise mechanisms by which the idea or concept of the mind comes into being. And, third, he had hypostasized the idea, treating it as if it were an active cause behind the phenomena, though the realm of value plays no direct or causal role in things.

Besides the idealism of Hegel and the realism of Herbart, Lotze had to distinguish his psychology from yet a third approach to the subject, one that was becoming increasingly prevalent and prominent in Germany: materialism. It was in the 1840s that the first materialist writings began to appear. In 1843 Feuerbach launched his *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft*, which preached the gospel of a sensual humanism; and in 1845 Karl Vogt began to publish his *Physiologische Briefe*, which notoriously proclaimed that thought relates to the brain as gall to the liver or urine to the kidneys.<sup>58</sup> Such writings were rapidly becoming popular, partly because of their accessible journalistic style, and partly because they claimed to represent the standpoint of the natural sciences. Materialism, it seemed, was cutting edge, the direction of the future, the inevitable result of physiological research. There seemed to be no stopping the critique of vital powers from turning into a critique of an immaterial soul, which seemed to be no less an occult quality.

Troubled by the growing popularity of the new materialism, Lotze felt compelled to take a stand toward it. In both "Seele und Seelenleben" and *Medizinische Psychologie* he added a section explicitly devoted to its refutation.<sup>59</sup> While he disapproved of materialism on moral and religious grounds, he insisted that such considerations have no bearing on a strictly philosophical discussion. The chief problem with materialism,

<sup>57</sup> Virtually the entire third part of the *Enzyklopädie*, entitled "Die Philosophie des Geistes", could be regarded as a psychology. It comprises two hundred paragraphs, §§377–577, in the 1830 edition.

<sup>58</sup> Carl Vogt, *Physiologische Briefe für Gebildete aller Stände*, Zweite Auflage (Gießen: Ricker, 1854), 323. Lotze cites this sentence in MP #32, 43. Vogt's dictum goes back to the French materialist Pierre Cabanis, whom Vogt studied in Paris. See Cabanis, *Rapports du Physique et du Moral de l'Homme*, in *Œuvres complètes de Cabanis* (Paris: Bossange, 1823), III, 159.

<sup>59</sup> See Section VI, "Sie Seele und die Centralorgane", SS 136–168; and "§3 Die Einwürfe des Materialismus", MP 30–45.

in his view, is entirely theoretical: it cannot do justice to the phenomena of mental life. Materialism is indeed the least satisfactory form of psychology: it cannot answer the question of existence, let alone that of value.

In “Seele und Seelenleben” it was the materialist theory of the soul that drew most of Lotze’s ire and fire. Given Lotze’s usual distaste for polemics, it is difficult to identify his precise target; still, the central thesis he wishes to attack is simple and plain enough: that the brain is “the organ of the soul”. As Ludwig Büchner, prince of the materialists, later formulated it: “...the activity of the soul is a function or performance of the substance of the brain.”<sup>60</sup> The crucial question in evaluating the theory, Lotze argues, is to determine *how* thinking needs the brain. It is precisely this question, though, that is left so vague. We cannot simply *identify* thinking with brain mass, given that thinking has no obvious physical attributes, such as size, shape or weight. We also cannot explain precisely how nervous or brain processes are necessary to thinking, and it is not clear that we can identify certain functions with certain parts of the brain (SS 139).<sup>61</sup> Although Lotze does not dispute that nervous activity is essential for sense perception, he questions whether it is necessary for *all* mental activity, especially those cases where no external stimuli are involved, viz., memory (141). Granting that at least some mental activity depends on the brain, he finds the concept of an organ an inappropriate metaphor to express the fact. If the brain were an organ, then it would be like an instrument or tool, something that the mind manipulates to achieve its ends; but that would give the mind a dominant role over the brain, which is obviously not what the theory intends (140). The metaphor implies both that the mind depends on the brain and that it is independent of it, an ambiguity the materialist never resolves (140). But, quite apart from the sheer vagueness of the theory, Lotze contends that it is mistaken in principle. We cannot ever bridge the conceptual gap between physical events or processes taking place in the brain and representations or consciousness. Exactly why just these events or processes (vibrations or light waves) give rise to just these sensations is utterly mysterious to us and beyond the ken of explanation (143, 144). While the plausibility of materialism rests with its analysis of sense perception, its main difficulty comes in explaining the higher functions of the soul, those which depend on its own activities, such as moral and aesthetic judgment (144, 145). Lotze’s references to moral and aesthetic judgment, though unexplored, are significant because they reveal his view that materialism cannot explain the question of value, let alone that of existence.

<sup>60</sup> Ludwig Büchner, *Kraft und Stoff*, 21st edition (Leipzig: Thomas, 1904), 258. The first edition of this work appeared in 1855. The theory was first stated by Karl Vogt in the first edition of his *Physiologische Briefe* (Gießen: Ricker, 1845–1847), 206; and it was elaborated by him in his *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft* (Gießen: Ricker, 1856), 102–124. It is not clear, however, where Lotze first learned this theory. It had been put forward by Pierre Cabanis much earlier.

<sup>61</sup> Both Büchner, *Kraft und Stoff*, 277–278, and Vogt, *Physiologische Briefe*, 114, pointed out that the latest research had been able to identify specific mental functions with specific parts of the brain. Vogt admitted, however, that he could not explain how nerve cells produced consciousness.

Lotze continued his attack on materialism in his *Medicinische Psychologie*, though now he finds a new target: the thesis that materialism alone is scientific. The fundamental selling point of materialism is that it alone appears to conform to the standards of science. But, Lotze replies, the materialist does not meet the very scientific standards he so eagerly advocates. The materialist assumes on the basis of analogy alone that the laws that hold for physics also hold for psychology. But there is no empirical evidence for such an assumption; and, indeed, mental and physical phenomena are so unlike on the face of it that we have better reason for the contrary assumption. Even the materialist should acknowledge that there is an indisputable heterogeneity between the content of sensations (viz., colors and sounds) and their physical stimulus (viz., light and sound waves) (MP 11, #3). Lotze accepts that psychology should be scientific in the sense of having the same general *standards* as the natural sciences, viz., empirical verification, precise formulation of laws; and he agrees that the principle of causality should hold sway over all phenomena, whether mental or physical. Nevertheless, he rejects the assumption that the laws of psychology should be based on the *same* laws as physics. Though mental and physical phenomena both conform to the same *general* laws of nature, they each have their own *specific* laws irreducible to one another (32; #19). The general procedure of science, Lotze argues, is not to reduce one kind of phenomena down to another but to recognize the differences between them and then to subsume them under even more general laws. So he holds out the prospect that someday there will be a general statics and mechanics for *all* changes and *all* things, whether mental or physical, and not simply physical masses alone (33–34; ##21–22).

Despite Lotze's rejection of realism, idealism and materialism, it is clear that he had high hopes for a science of psychology. Somehow, it would have to do justice to the questions of existence and value, and somehow it would have to avoid the premature and simplistic generalizations of materialism. Sure enough, in his 'Seele und Seelenleben' Lotze sketches an ambitious program for psychology, a general theory of the mind that treats questions of existence and value, and indeed a whole lot more (203–204). A complete psychology, we learn, involves no less than six parts: 1) a "dialectical" derivation of the phenomena of mental life and an interpretation of their ideal meaning; 2) an empirical and speculative treatment of the stages of development of the soul; 3) a "physiology of the soul", i.e., an exposition of the physical and mechanical relations of the life of the soul; 4) a mechanics of mental life, i.e., a demonstration of how the contents of the ideas of each soul determine the specific manner in which it acts; 5) a psychology of individuals; and 6) a theory about the fate of the soul in the world as a whole. Lotze goes on to explain, however, that in his article he has limited himself to the third task alone. The reason for such a restriction, he implies, is purely occasional: he was writing for a handbook of physiology. He suggests, though, that he will undertake the other tasks on future occasions.

Given that ambitious agenda, one would expect Lotze's *Medicinische Psychologie*, a massive treatise, to undertake at least some of the other tasks. But nothing of the kind takes place. Lotze again limits himself to the third task, as if it were all he should and

could do. Now, it seemed, psychology had become equivalent for him to the third task alone. The rationale for this change in his thinking comes from a general distinction he draws between two kinds of knowledge. There is knowledge of the essence of an object, *cognitio rei*; and there is knowledge of the relations of an object, *cognitio circa rem* (57; #45). The first kind of knowledge, which concerns the question of worth or value, is intuitive; the second kind of knowledge, which concerns the question of existence, is discursive, indeed nomological, involving law-like connections between things. The first kind of knowledge is characteristic of poetry and ordinary life, whereas the second kind is that of science. Lotze therefore *implies* that knowledge of value and meaning falls outside the province of science proper. While he does not explicitly draw this conclusion, he expressly insists that the third task is now the chief agenda of psychology. He explains that “the greatest need of our psychological science” is to determine the question of existence rather than value (68–9; #54). Though he continues to express his respect for Hegel and the idealist tradition, he now makes “physiology of the soul” the chief occupation of psychology. Accordingly, he writes that the chief task of his *Medicinische Psychologie* is to treat the law-like relationships between mind and body.<sup>62</sup> The reason for this shift in Lotze’s priorities is ultimately strategic: at this stage of his thinking, he had no clear conception of *how* there could be a science of the first kind of knowledge, of how the intellectual intuitions of ordinary life and poetry could be translated into another discursive or conceptual medium. He writes of a “dialectical derivation” of the ideal dimension of mental life; but that term is a red flag, because it is very difficult to determine what this would be, given Lotze’s very low opinion of Hegel’s methodology. It is only in *Mikrokosmos* that Lotze would turn to some of the other tasks of psychology that he laid down in his agenda of 1846.

In defining the subject matter of psychology Lotze uses the traditional concept of “the soul” (*die Seele*), which was still the prevalent term of art in mid-nineteenth century Germany.<sup>63</sup> Even Herbart, for all his dislike of metaphysics, still retained the concept of the soul, which he found indispensable.<sup>64</sup> The concept was, of course, deeply resonant, heavily laden with moral and religious connotations. At the very least it seems to imply an immaterial thing, a kind of substance distinct from matter. But, at the very beginning of his enquiry, Lotze insists on bracketing all such metaphysical assumptions. In “Seele und Seelenleben” he explains that he does not use the term to designate “a separate species of substance”, and that it is for him “a phenomenological expression”, i.e., one which refers to only a distinct kind of phenomena, namely, psychic as opposed to physical phenomena. He defines the soul as only “the unknown substrate” of psychic phenomena “insofar as it is in a position to produce them” (18). Despite such caveats, in *Medicinische Psychologie* Lotze gives the term a more substantial meaning, so that it refers to the subject of different and changing properties, and so

<sup>62</sup> See the “Vorwort”, v.

<sup>63</sup> Merz, *History* II, 192–237.

<sup>64</sup> Herbart, *Psychologie als empirische Wissenschaft* §31, V, 253.

that it designates “the ground” of psychic phenomena; it is still left open, however, in what the substance consists and what kind of explanation it provides (MP 9–10; #1). But Lotze stoutly resists any attempt to reduce the concept of soul down to the sum of its activities (MP 136–137; ##122–123).

Although Lotze attempted to give the concept of the soul a strictly phenomenological meaning, he realized that making it the special subject of psychology was still controversial, that it still stood in need of justification, especially in his materialist age. Attempting to respond to this challenge, he embarked upon a long discussion, in the first section of “Seele und Seelenleben” and in the first chapter of *Medicinische Psychologie*, of the different grounds for introducing the concept of the soul into psychology.<sup>65</sup> Traditionally, he says, there were three grounds for postulating the existence of a soul as a distinct subject and cause of psychic phenomena. First, the phenomenological difference between mental and physical phenomena. Second, the fact of the unity of consciousness, its indivisibility, which stands in contrast to the divisibility of matter. Third, the fact that human beings appear to be self-moving or spontaneous, having the power to act or move themselves without being moved into action by prior causes. Lotze gives different weight to each of these arguments and draws different conclusions from them.

Regarding the first argument, Lotze insists that we should accept the basic phenomenological fact behind it: that mental and physical phenomena are heterogeneous. There are, of course, constant connections between these phenomena, which we can formulate in precise quantitative laws. Still, these connections do not mean that cause and effect are homogeneous with one another; they are indeed very different, because there is no similarity *in content* between them, such that one could be logically derived from the other, viz., we cannot infer that this light wave must produce just this color (MP 11–12). Lotze admits, however, that even though psychic and physical phenomena are logically and phenomenologically distinct from one another, that is still not sufficient reason to infer that they belong to *distinct* substances (SS 6; MP 12–13). It is still possible that both psychic and physical phenomena, however incomparable, still inhere in a single substance. After all, this was the assumption of Spinoza, who maintained that they are simply different attributes of one and the same thing (SS 7). Nevertheless, though we can assume in principle such a single substance, Lotze insists that it will not help us to explain the origin of such very distinct phenomena (SS 7; MP 14). Though perhaps identical in their origin, they are still very different from one another in their appearance. Since the content of mental and physical phenomena are so incomparable, it is justifiable to assume, *though only initially and provisionally*, that psychic phenomena have their own unique principle and cause (SS 7; MP 25).

Lotze accepts the essential contention of the second argument: that the unity of consciousness demonstrates the existence of an irreducible and numerically identical

<sup>65</sup> “Seele und Seelenleben”, 4–19; *Medicinische Psychologie*, 9–65; §§1–5.



soul (SS 144; MP 43, #31). He is at pains to explain that the unity of consciousness does not imply that consciousness maintains a constant degree of intensity over time; all that it means is that it is possible to be aware of distinct impressions at different times (SS 13; MP 15, #7). What Lotze seems to have in mind here, though he makes no explicit mention of it, is the Kantian unity of apperception, i.e., that to have distinct representations at different times it must be possible for a single subject to be aware of having them. Lotze takes such a unity to be a fact, and then infers from it that it must have a single soul as its source. We cannot construct such a unity from the addition of parts, from a mere aggregate, he argues, because even if the parts were psychic, viz., sensations, feelings or impulses, this would not give us a single soul but only many different ones (SS 15; MP 18, #9). For the addition of these parts to yield a single subject, we must already presuppose that they are states of one subject or that there is only one subject having them. Lotze's argument here is remarkable for someone otherwise so eager to express his agreement with Kant; for it violates Kant's strictures against paralogisms. Kant permits the very possibility that Lotze forbids: that a single self-consciousness could be formed by a series of distinct representations where each transfers its content to subsequent representations.<sup>66</sup>

Regarding the third argument, Lotze regards it as the least convincing. That we are spontaneous agents is not a fact of consciousness but an inference, and moreover one based on insufficient evidence (SS 16–17; MP 20–21, #11). We learn from common experience that we often do not know all the causes that go into the production of a phenomenon, and this might be indeed the case with our own actions. There is no reason to think that we must be aware of all the causes of our actions, some of which might be buried deep in our subconscious or physical nature. In general, Lotze finds that the difficulties with the question of freedom are too great to make the concept of freedom part of the foundation of psychology. However, he is very careful to add that, in rejecting the argument, he does not mean to question the validity of freedom itself. While there is perhaps insufficient evidence *for* the existence of freedom, there is also no compelling evidence *against* it. And though he would reject a belief that is *contrary* to the available evidence, he would still allow himself to hold beliefs for which there is insufficient evidence (MP 36–37, #25).

The upshot of Lotze's appraisal of these arguments is not entirely clear. The question remains what kind of dualism they permit. While there are passages where Lotze seems to affirm a strictly *methodological* dualism (SS 16–17), i.e., one strictly between methodological approaches, there are other passages where he seems to allow an *ontological* dualism, i.e., one between distinct things or substances. In both "Seele und Seelenleben" and *Medizinische Psychologie* he explains that he distinguishes between mind and matter only in a *methodological* sense, i.e., he does not affirm that they are

<sup>66</sup> See Kant, KrV, A 353, 363–364n. In "Seele und Seelenleben" Lotze notes that the unity of the soul as a substance is insufficient to ground unity of awareness (182). However, he still makes the converse inference, as if unity of substance followed in some way from unity of awareness.



distinct kinds of things but only that they designate distinct kinds of phenomena whose interconnections and sources remain the subject of later enquiry. He deliberately leaves it undecided whether the opposition between these phenomena can be ultimately surmounted in some higher ground of unity; and he stresses that his only concern is that one should not begin enquiry with such an assumption, as Spinoza and Schelling had (SS 7, 13; MP 27, 29, ##15, 17). Still, there are other passages that seem to allow an ontological dualism. We are told in no uncertain terms in the *Medicinische Psychologie*, for example, that we can accept a dualism between “realities” or “objects” and still not violate the principle of the unity of nature (MP 22, 29, ##12, 17). This is because we can distinguish between the *uniformity* of laws and the *variety* of the objects governed by them. The demand for a unified conception of nature need not commit us, Lotze argues, to the assumption that mind and matter are the same kind of substance, but only to the view that they conform to the same general laws and that they are both part of the general plan of nature (MP 22–23, #12). We could still accept an ontological dualism, then, and uphold belief in the unity of nature where this unity would be nomological and teleological rather than substantial.

Whether on methodological or ontological grounds, Lotze believed that he had good reason to introduce the concept of the soul into psychology. Even so, reviving that concept raised formidable problems all its own. One issue concerned the apparent discrepancy between Lotze’s rejection of the concept of a *Lebenskraft* and his affirmation of that of the soul. While he had expelled metaphysical entities from physiology, he seemed to re-introduce them into psychology. What in the world, however, could justify anti-vitalism in physiology and animism in psychology? That was just the question raised by some of Lotze’s contemporaries.<sup>67</sup> Lotze himself poses the same question in his *Medicinische Psychologie* (40–3; ##29–31): “Why not say that the concept of the soul is only the sum of all the activities of a person just as the concept of a living power is only the sum of all the activities of the organism?” Lotze’s reply is that we can reduce the concept of living force down to its manifestations, but the same is not the case with the concept of the soul, which is an irreducible and simple unity (43; #31). Though he realizes that the concept provides no definite explanation of phenomena, he still insists that it serves a useful function in excluding some explanations that are false in principle, viz., materialistic or reductivist ones (38; #26).

Another major problem with introducing the concept of the soul into psychology is that it seemed to make the interaction between mind and body mysterious. For how do an indivisible and unextended soul and a divisible and extended body act upon one another? That was the classical problem, and now it seemed that psychology would be no closer to its solution. Lotze goes to special pains to address this objection in his *Medicinische Psychologie* (§6, ##53–64), and in doing so expounds his own theory of mental-physical interaction. He had already sketched that theory in his *Allgemeine*

<sup>67</sup> See the sources in Merz, *History*, II, 407–8n.

*Pathologie*, as we have seen,<sup>68</sup> but now he develops it in more detail. Its central thesis is that even though there is no connection in *quality* or *content* between the mental and physical, there is still one in *quantity* or *proportion*. There is none in content because cause and effect are heterogeneous from one another, i.e., the qualities of the effect cannot be logically derived from or explained by the cause. There can be, however, one in proportion because there are laws which determine how variations in duration, intensity, and succession in a stimulus produce corresponding variations in sensation (SS 29). Determining such laws had been the main goal of psychology since the 1830s—specifically, the work of Weber and Volkmann—and Lotze is very intent on providing an epistemic foundation for it. Hence he argues that the qualitative differences between the mental and physical alone do not undermine the possibility of determining laws about how they vary with one another. There are marked qualitative differences between things in the *physical* world, and these have not prevented physics from discovering precise laws about how they interact with one another. So the problems of explaining the interaction between the mental and physical are no greater than those of explaining the interaction between things in general. However different things are in their phenomenal properties, and however unknowable in their *intrinsic* ones, it is still possible to determine precise laws about the co-variation of their *quantities*.

Lotze is no less concerned, however, with establishing the precise *limits* of such laws. All scientific laws establish precise quantitative co-variations between things, but they cannot explain their intrinsic nature or qualitative constitution (MP 72–73; #58). This is evident in the case of psychology, because even though we can determine the quantitative variation or proportion between stimulus and sensation, we cannot explain why just this stimulus (a certain wavelength) results in just this sensation (a certain color). The whole difficulty about interaction arises, Lotze argues, because we expect to know how the *content* or *matter* (*Stoff*) of the mental and physical depend on one another; this is really demanding too much, however, because we can never know the connection between their intrinsic properties (MP 70; #56).

Lotze continues to call his theory of mental-physical interaction “occasionalism”, though this is a misleading term because, unlike the classical occasionalists of the seventeenth century, he does not deny the reality of mental-physical interaction, still less does he refuse to attribute activity to finite things. In his *Allgemeine Pathologie* he had used it in the stricter classical sense to exclude *all* interaction between the mental and physical. Now, however, he is at pains to point out that the impossibility of explaining the interaction between the mental and physical does *not* mean that this interaction does not exist (MP 76; #61).<sup>69</sup> There is an interaction between extrinsic

<sup>68</sup> See Part II, chapter 3, section 2, above.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *Allgemeine Pathologie*, 58, where Lotze denies “*Wechselwirkung*” between the mental and physical, and *Medizinische Psychologie*, 76, where he stresses that one cannot question “*die thatsächliche Existenz eines Causalnexus zwischen beiden [Materie und Seele]*.”

properties, which we can know and express in precise laws; and there is an interaction between intrinsic properties, though this we cannot know at all. Still, Lotze retains the language, and even some of the meaning, of the classical doctrine, insofar as he holds that the intrinsic natures of mind and body are entirely independent and not affected by their interaction with one another. He therefore says that one is “the occasion” but not “the cause” of the other, where it is understood that a cause would alter the intrinsic properties of the thing. Part of Lotze’s meaning in saying this becomes clear from his theory that a sensation acts as a “sign” or “signal” for its stimulus, i.e., just as there is no necessary connection between a sign and what it signifies, because a sign can stand for anything whatsoever, so the sensation is the sign or signal for its stimulus (SS 29).

Lotze’s introduction of the concept of the soul into psychology, and his own occasionalism, give the firm and clear impression that he is a dualist, and indeed one of the classical Cartesian variety. While he seems to allow some ultimate identity of mind and body, he grants it little more than a thin logical possibility, which he then quickly dismisses for its failure to explain the phenomenological differences between the mental and physical. Surely, then, Lotze is a dualist, or at least that would seem to be the ultimate tendency of his thought. Understandably, that had been the conclusion of some of Lotze’s contemporaries.<sup>70</sup>

Such an interpretation is unacceptable, however. It is not only difficult to reconcile with Lotze’s thought as a whole, specifically his idealist metaphysics, but there is also explicit textual evidence against it. At the close of the first chapter of *Medizinische Psychologie* Lotze lays down all his cards and leaves us in no doubt whatsoever about his ultimate metaphysical principles (§5, 55–65). Here he makes it perfectly clear that he is not really a dualist at all, and that he adopts a dualism only on the level of ordinary experience. While he professes a *methodological* dualism solely for the purposes of empirical research, on a deeper *metaphysical* level he repudiates dualism entirely. Lotze explains that there are three possible views regarding the reality of the mental and physical: materialism, which holds that mind is simply an epiphenomena of matter; identity theory, which holds that the mental and physical are different appearances or attributes of a single substance; and, finally, “spiritualism”, which denies the reality of matter and holds only spirit to have ultimate reality (55; #43). Lotze rejects materialism categorically, because its explanation of the mind is too reductionist. Materialism finds all the reality in the world *between* things, in how they appear to one another; but it completely neglects the deeper reality *inside* them, what lies in their intrinsic natures (47; #36). He is less hostile to identity theory, but it too he finds problematic, for the ultimate unity of the mental and physical is utterly obscure to him. The mental and physical are supposed to be different sides or aspects of a single thing; but what is this thing, this mysterious X? What are they sides or aspects of? It is only the third position that Lotze regards as unproblematic and adopts as his own (55; #43). According to

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, Merz, *History* II, 408n.

“spiritualism”, spirit alone has substantial and original being whereas matter has only accidental or secondary being (61, #48). Spiritualism holds that the concept of matter, though a useful and necessary fiction in empirical research, has no “objective validity” (61; #48). While the materialist holds that there is no spiritual substance and that spirit is only matter as it appears under certain conditions, the spiritualist turns the tables on him and declares the very opposite: that there is no material substance and that matter is really only spirit as it appears under certain conditions (62; #49). True to his “teleological idealism”, Lotze then makes it clear that his reason for accepting spiritualism is ultimately ethical. The assumption of the existence of matter contradicts “the ethical presupposition” according to which there is rationality throughout the whole of things and the world exists only for the reality of the good (61; #48).

We must place Lotze’s occasionalism within this broader idealist context. In the *Medizinische Psychologie* he is explicit in affirming the consequences of his spiritualistic principles for mental–physical interaction. These principles mean that the body and soul interact not despite their *apparent* heterogeneity but because of their *ultimate* homogeneity. Because matter is only an appearance of something supersensible, mind and matter are not two equal and independent realities after all (79; #63). “Matter, insofar as we believe we perceive it, we can regard only as a shadow; a supersensible reality is also in it the substantial core that throws the shadow.” If this is so, then the mystery disappears about the interaction between soul and body; for now it becomes clear that matter does not act upon the soul insofar as it is an inert and dead substance but only insofar as it too is something active and living, and so homogeneous with the soul.

#### 4. A Kantian Psychology

Having treated Lotze’s views on the foundation of psychology, we now need to consider his more specific psychological doctrines. Lotze was a major contributor to psychology in the nineteenth century, and scholarship on the history of the subject regularly assigns him a prominent place.<sup>71</sup> Though his contributions, and the disputes of his day, now seem aged, we still must take them into account to understand Lotze’s place in nineteenth-century intellectual history.

Although Lotze is never so explicit, the more one examines his psychology, the more it becomes clear that it was an attempt to preserve the Kantian legacy. Remarkably, this point has been ignored in histories of psychology; but any student of Kant quickly sees Lotze’s debts. His theories of perception, feeling and volition plainly reveal Kantian influence. And even Lotze’s agenda is Kantian. He feared that the dominant empirical

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Granville Stanley Hall, *Founders of Modern Psychology* (New York: Appleton, 1912), 65–121; Edwin Boring, *A History of Experimental Psychology* (New York: Century, 1929), 250–259; George Brett, *A History of Psychology* (London: George, Allen & Unwin, 1921), 139–150; Gardner Murphy, *An Historical Introduction to Psychology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1949), 145–148, 287–288; and Otto Klemm, *Geschichte der Psychologie* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1911), 351–356 and *passim*.

approach to psychology in his day involved a relapse in epistemology and metaphysics: it seemed to promote empiricism in epistemology and materialism in metaphysics. Against these tendencies, Lotze saw it as his role to remind contemporaries of basic Kantian lessons.

The imprint of the Kantian legacy on Lotze's psychology is apparent from its general structure. In true Kantian fashion, Lotze affirms a tripartite division of the main faculties of the soul. We learn in the *Medicinische Psychologie* that there are three fundamental forms of mental activity: sensation, feeling and willing (136; #122). The soul is said to be that thing whose chief forms of activity are representing, feeling and striving (138; #124). The Kantian allusion, though never announced as such, is unmistakable: Lotze's three faculties correspond essentially with Kant's own division of the mind into the faculties of cognition, volition and feeling.<sup>72</sup> In his retrospective *Streitschriften* Lotze tells us how his aim in psychology had been to combat Herbart's excessive intellectualism, which would reduce all faculties of the mind down to representation.<sup>73</sup> He explains that he had attempted to rectify such a narrow perspective by demonstrating the autonomy of will and feeling. That completes the analogy with Kant, who had rebelled against the rationalist tradition for reducing all faculties down to the *vis representativae*.

Following his tripartite division of the mind, Lotze devotes a chapter to each faculty in Book II of his *Medicinische Psychologie*. He begins in chapter 1 with the analysis of sensation (*Empfindung*). True to his psychophysical program, he investigates the physiological processes behind sensation, especially the relationship between it and the nervous system. From the very beginning Lotze stresses the heterogeneity between the mental and physical, which he insists is a basic *phenomenological* fact even if it is not an ultimate *metaphysical* one (MP 137; #124). While the nervous process is a physical event, which takes place in space, sensation is a mental event, which takes place only in the soul (SS 28; MP 203–204, #182). The difference between sensation and nervous process is for Lotze essentially a difference in *content*, i.e., the specific quality of a sensation cannot be inferred from the specific properties of the stimulus and the nervous process. For example, from a sound wave of a certain oscillation we cannot infer a specific sound; from a light wave of a certain intensity we cannot infer a specific color. In short, colors and sounds are very different from the causal processes that give rise to them. We do not understand why this kind of stimulus produces just this kind of sensation; we do not know the precise mechanism that makes one result in the other (SS 28–29). However deep we peer into the nervous system, we never see how its processes are transformed into a sensation, which is something that appears only to the soul.

Though he believed the transformation of stimulus into sensation is ultimately a mystery, Lotze still sketched in detail the process by which one led to the other (MP

<sup>72</sup> See Kant, *Erste Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft* §III, Akademie Ausgabe, XX, 205–208.

<sup>73</sup> *Streitschriften*, 11–12.

174–81; ##157–61). There was a complicated chain of events consisting in several stages: external stimulus (viz., the light or sound waves); the effect of the stimulus on the nerves; the transmission of the nerve signals to the brain; the transmission of signals from the brain to the soul; and finally the sensation as an object of self-awareness. Lotze stresses how the quality of the stimulus is transformed throughout this process, so that in the end there is no similarity between cause and effect (180–1; #161). We therefore cannot conceive of sensation as a kind of copy or image of the objects that cause them (174; #156). His narrative of the physiological process thus has a Kantian moral: that what we perceive is not given but constructed.

Although Lotze rejects naive realism, he still thinks that his account of the perceptual process is compatible with a degree of realism. He is convinced that no purely idealist account of sensation can be satisfactory; we cannot assume that the activities of the subject alone are the source of sensation, which always requires some external stimulus. This does not mean, however, that the external stimulus has to be an unknowable thing-in-itself. For even though there is no *similarity in content* between sensation and stimulus, there is still a *proportionality* between them, so that the relations between sensations vary directly with changes in the relations of their stimulus (SS 29; MP 182; #163). This means that changes in the intensity, duration and speed of the stimulus cause corresponding changes in sensation (MP 203; #182). In thus introducing an element of realism into his theory of sensation, Lotze was accommodating a central point from Herbart, who had complained that idealism could not explain the origin of specific relations in the manifold of sense.<sup>74</sup>

True to his mechanistic principles, Lotze argues in “Seele. Seeleleben” that it could be established as a general law that every definite nervous state “a”, which is occasioned by some external stimulus, is universally and constantly conjoined with a definite sensation “α” and no other (SS 31). Though he recognizes that the application of this law to particular cases is more complicated, because there are always intervening factors, he still insists that it is valid as a general principle (SS 30). Rather boldly, Lotze doubted that there are any other important factors to take into account in connecting stimulus with sensation, viz., the internal constitution of the nerves themselves. What was decisive in forming the quality of a sensation, he was convinced, is simply the stimulus, not the nerves themselves, all of which are capable of conducting any stimulus (AP 156).<sup>75</sup> Having laid this down as a general law, Lotze then went on to propose another “fantasy”: that all nervous processes of different senses are fundamentally alike insofar as they can be all treated purely mathematically, so that they differ only according to the degree, direction, duration of their stimuli (SS 37). According to this fantasy, the nervous process itself consists essentially only in movements, where these differ from one another only with regard to the modalities of motion (MP 201; #179). This fantasy shows Lotze at his most mechanistic; if it seems very close to physicalism, we

<sup>74</sup> Herbart, *Allgemeine Metaphysik*, in *Sämtliche Werke* VIII, 17–22, §§169–171.

<sup>75</sup> “AP” signifies Lotze’s *Allgemeine Pathologie*.

must remember that Lotze had placed the entire nervous process in the physical realm only after distinguishing it from the mental.

Lotze's general law and fantasy were extremely pointed and controversial, aimed directly against one of the established doctrines of nineteenth-century psychology, namely, the theory of specific nerve energies. This theory was first put forward by Johannes Müller in 1826,<sup>76</sup> and it was then elaborated and refined by Hermann von Helmholtz in 1852.<sup>77</sup> Helmholtz regarded the doctrine as one of the most important advances in physiology, and even compared it with the discovery of the law of gravitation.<sup>78</sup> He had virtually ignored, however, the criticisms that Lotze had leveled against it in the 1840s.<sup>79</sup> According to Müller's and Helmholtz's theory, there are different kinds of nerves attached to the different senses, so that all stimuli acting upon these nerves produce sensations only appropriate for their specific senses. Thus all stimuli affecting the optic nerve produce only sensations of light; all stimuli affecting the auditory nerve result only in sounds. Hence the quality of a sensation depends less on the stimulus than the nerve apparatus itself. In his *Medicinische Psychologie* Lotze himself formulates the theory as follows: "that every nerve has a determinate unchanging class of sensations belonging to it, [so] that it is disposed to these sensations for all possible stimuli acting upon it"<sup>80</sup> (185: #166).

Lotze had targeted the nerve energy theory as early as 1842 in his *Allgemeine Pathologie* (152–157), and he continued to contest it in his "Seele. Seelenleben" and *Medicinische Psychologie* (SS 31–40; MP 182–197; ##163–175). Some of his objections against the theory are straightforwardly empirical. Anatomy provides insufficient evidence to show that there are fundamental differences in structure and composition between the different classes of nerves (SS 31). Furthermore, the theory had been too hastily generalized for all the senses from sight and hearing alone (AP 153–154). Lotze does not question the general fact that the theory is based upon: namely, "that each nerve calls forth only a specific qualified class of sensations." (AP 152; SS 34). He doubted, however, the explanation that the theory gave for this fact: that it rests on the specific physical constitution or organization of the nerves themselves. What the theory attributed to the nerve's constitution could be just as well explained by the constant qualities of the stimulus, or by the plasticity and habituation of the nerves (SS 34). Lotze's chief objection to the theory, though, rested upon its tacit attempt to explain the whole process of sensation. By stressing the importance of nerve structure

<sup>76</sup> Johannes Müller, *Zur vergleichende Physiologie des Gesichtsinnes des Menschen und der Thiere* (Leipzig: Cnobloch, 1826), 6, 44–45. Also see his *Handbuch der Physiologie des Menschen* (Coblenz: Hölscher, 1834–1840), II, 251–254.

<sup>77</sup> Hermann Helmholtz, *Ueber die Natur der menschlichen Sinnesempfindungen* (Berlin: Unger, 1852).

<sup>78</sup> As cited in Merz, *History*, II, 483.

<sup>79</sup> On the context and reception of Lotze's critique of this theory, see above all William Woodward, "H. Lotze's Critique of J. Müller's Doctrine of Specific Nerve Energies", in *Medical History* XIX (1975), 147–157.

<sup>80</sup> Or as Lotze puts it even more simply in the *Grundzüge der Psychologie* (13; §10): "...every individual sensory nerve, by whatever it might be stimulated, produces always the same sensation."

in producing the quality of a sensation, the theory made it seem as if the nerves themselves were the chief factor in sensation and as if the perceiver himself had little to do with it. It was as if the nerves themselves made something red and green; but sensations, Lotze insists, are conceivable only as a manner of sensing of some subject (MP 201; #179). We must never forget that sensations have a content only for some self-conscious sener. This is how he puts the thrust of his objection in *Medicinische Psychologie*:

One seeks the reason for the specific sensation always only in the *qualitative specificity* of the nervous process...But in what does this quality consist? It cannot be similar to the sensation itself, as if the nervous process entered unchanged into the soul; it can only be as a stimulus that arouses the soul, so that from itself it produces and shapes the sensation. One should not say of the nerve that in it something is formed as red or green, sound or smell, as if it were complete before consciousness. Just as speed and direction are conceivable only as states of motion, so green and sweet are conceivable only as a manner of *sensing*; no one would know what they were before they were sensed.<sup>81</sup> (201; #179)

It is somewhat ironic to find Lotze contesting this theory on the all too Kantian grounds that it underplays the role of the self-conscious subject. For the theory of specific nerve energies was taken by Helmholtz himself to be nothing less than “the empirical proof of Kant’s theoretical account of the nature of the human faculty of knowledge.”<sup>82</sup> Lotze, however, did not see things this way. For in placing such emphasis on the purely *physical* structure of the nerves it took away from, rather than supported the spirit of Kantian doctrine, which is its emphasis on the fundamental role of the self-conscious subject in the constitution of experience.

After his treatment of sensation in chapter 1 of Book II of *Medicinische Psychologie*, Lotze proceeds to examine feeling in chapter 2. He defines feeling in very limited Kantian terms, so that it concerns “states of pleasure or displeasure” (MP 233; #208). Feeling differs from sensation insofar as sensation is perception alone, indifferent to its content, whereas feeling involves liking or disliking it. If we were purely intellectual beings, we would have no feelings toward anything. We would view what promotes or damages our well-being with equal indifference (234; #209). Lotze does not dispute that sensation and feeling are intimately intertwined in experience and ordinary life. We seldom perceive things with complete detachment, and we usually perceive them with some degree of pleasure and pain. Nevertheless, he insists that, on conceptual grounds, we should distinguish between sensation and feeling, because there is no *necessary* connection between the content of a sensation and our liking or disliking it (235; #209).

Like Kant, Lotze is intent on depriving pleasure of any cognitive content (MP 235–7; #210). Pleasure is not the consciousness of what promotes our well-being, still less an intuition of perfection. Although pleasure and pain are closely connected with

<sup>81</sup> Cf. MP 185; #166.

<sup>82</sup> Helmholtz, *Handbuch der Physiologischen Optik* (Leipzig: Voß, 1896), 249.



what promotes or hinders our vital activities, we are never aware of this connection as such. We do not first receive a stimulus, perceive how it relates to our well-being, and then feel pleasure or pain.<sup>83</sup> Rather, we simply feel the pleasure or pain immediately, without any conscious awareness of how it affects our well-being. Although there is a close *natural* connection between pleasure and pain and what promotes or hinders our well-being, there is again no *necessary* or *logical* connection between them. We can feel pleasure in things that are harmful, pain in things that are beneficial, viz., the sweet taste of poison and the bitter taste of medicine (237–238; #211). A feeling is at best only a momentary and partial measure of whether a stimulus promotes or hinders our well-being; it does not give us knowledge of whether something is truly advantageous or disadvantageous on the whole or in the long run (238–239; #212).

Lotze distinguishes between two basic forms of pleasure.<sup>84</sup> There are *sensible* pleasures, which depend directly upon some stimulus to our senses, and there are *aesthetic* or *intellectual* pleasures, which depend not only upon the two “higher senses” of hearing and sight but also upon the intellect. Sensible pleasures are essentially subjective and depend upon the private interest of the individual; aesthetic or intellectual pleasures appeal to the “universal spirit within us”. Though Lotze never refers to Kant in making this distinction, its obvious source is the distinction between the agreeable and the beautiful in the *Kritik der Urteilstkraft*.<sup>85</sup>

Though the distinction between two basic forms of pleasure is very crude, Lotze does not pretend that it provides a complete classification of the varieties of pleasure. He denies that there is a single homogenous quality of pleasure or pain (MP 261–264; ##233–235). Pleasure and pain are by themselves simply abstract terms, which do not denote anything real by themselves. All pleasures and pains have their own specific qualitative character, which depends on their particular object, what we take pleasure in. Hence Lotze denies the possibility of anything like Bentham’s “felicific calculus”, which would measure the worth of pleasures and pains simply in quantitative terms, viz., by their intensity and duration.

Chapter 3 of Book II of *Medicinische Psychologie*, much admired by William James,<sup>86</sup> is devoted to the faculty of the will. The main philosophical concern of this chapter is a critique of the idealist theory of the will, according to which its activities are perfectly transparent to us, and according to which the will has the power to transform the entire world. Such was the Promethean theory of Fichte, which here crashes against the hard facts of experience and medical psychology. Lotze stresses that the activity of the will is obscure to us: we do not know it directly but only through its effects (MP 305; #270); and we have no knowledge whatsoever of the nervous and muscular

<sup>83</sup> As Lotze puts it in his *Grundzüge der Psychologie*, 45, §2.

<sup>84</sup> This distinction appears in *Medicinische Psychologie*, though it is rather undeveloped. See 242–245; ##215–217. It is more explicit in his later *Grundzüge der Psychologie*, 45–46, §§3–4.

<sup>85</sup> *Kritik der Urteilstkraft*, §5, Akademie Ausgabe, V, 209–210.

<sup>86</sup> See William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Boston: Holt, 1890), II, 523n

processes that are so essential to action (287–288; #254). We relate to our bodies not like an artist who creates everything in his artifact, and who understands perfectly everything that he creates; rather, we are like workers who operate machinery whose inner parts we do not understand (288; #255). Rather than having the power to shape its own actions, the will is more “a rather accessory element” in their production (313; #278). Desire and aversion are not driving forces but simply feelings of being driven (298; #264). Though Lotze thus stresses the dependence of volition on muscular and nervous processes within the body, he still stops himself short and refuses to make the will entirely their product. His target is more Fichte’s excessive voluntarism, which would make the will master of the world, than Kant’s own dualism, which would make the will independent of it. Ultimately, his Kantian loyalties reassert themselves. Fearing the deterministic consequences of stressing too great a dependence on the body, Lotze stresses how the will consists in “an inner event of the soul”, and how its activity lies behind but also beyond the physical determination of muscles, nerves and external stimuli (301, 313; ##267, 275). The will is the starting point of movements in the physical world; and though those movements are completely explicable mechanically, the will itself remains outside their field of force (301; #267).

Although the structure of Lotze’s psychology is Kantian, it is necessary to ask whether this structure is true to his thinking as a whole. The romantic strands in Lotze’s philosophy cannot be so well accommodated by it. This becomes especially apparent in Lotze’s treatment of the concept of feeling. While in the context of his psychology feeling appears as only one faculty of mind along with cognition and volition, Lotze gave feeling a much greater importance in his philosophy as a whole, an importance that goes far beyond the confines of his psychology. Feeling played a pivotal role in his aesthetics, ethics and metaphysics. In his aesthetics, as we have seen, it is feeling that makes us aware of the ultimate values or meaning of things.<sup>87</sup> And in his ethics Lotze makes feeling nothing less than the *ratio cognoscendi* of value, because we determine whether something is good or bad for ourselves through feelings of pleasure or pain.<sup>88</sup> Last but not least, in Lotze’s metaphysics feeling proves to be most basic form of life which is omnipresent in all things; all things are alive, and what makes them so is their power to feel. In all these respects, then, Lotze gave feeling an importance beyond its role in his Kantian psychology, where it is only one of three faculties of mind. Thus Lotze’s romantic aesthetics and metaphysics pushed against the straitjacket of his Kantian psychology. Nowhere, though, does Lotze reveal that he was aware of this deep tension in his philosophy.

## 5. Theory of Local Signs

Lotze’s psychology is best remembered today for its theory of spatial perception, specifically, its so-called doctrine of “local signs”. Lotze devoted much care to the exact

<sup>87</sup> See section 1 of this chapter.

<sup>88</sup> See *Mikrokosmos*, Book V, chapter 5, II, 314–320.

formulation and proof of this doctrine, whose exposition takes up all of chapter 4 of Part II of his *Medizinische Psychologie*, by far the longest chapter in the book.<sup>89</sup> The theory was widely influential—versions of it were advanced by Helmholtz, Wundt and Stumpf—though it also became highly controversial.<sup>90</sup> While Helmholtz, Wundt and Stumpf regarded it as a great step forward, Dilthey wondered how anyone could ever have taken it seriously.

The problem Lotze's theory attempts to solve concerns the localization of objects in space. Why do we perceive an object in a specific location? Why do we place it in just this location and no other? *Prima facie* this might not seem that problematic. Is it not the case that we just assign objects the places we see them to have? Unfortunately, this answer presupposes naive realism, as if the spatial positions of objects were just given to us. We know from the facts of psychology, however, that the perceptual activities of the intellect, nerves and senses transform the given. Apart from these facts, Lotze's philosophical starting point made the phenomenon of localization seem especially mysterious. True to his phenomenological dualism, he assumes that sensations are not extended in space but that they exist for the soul alone, which does not exist in any place. Furthermore, following Kant, he held that sensations, the original given element in experience, reveal only an *intensive* magnitude;<sup>91</sup> hence their *extensive* magnitude has to be constructed. Given these psychological facts and such premises, the problem of perceiving spatial location seems especially acute. Assuming that there is an actual spatial order existing independent of consciousness—and Lotze's realism requires that there is such an order—the question remains how the mind *recreates* that order so that its perception corresponds with it?<sup>92</sup> Alternatively, how does the mind, perceiving immediately only intensive qualities, come to perceive them as extensive?

Lotze's reflections on this problem were stimulated by the evident difficulties of contemporary psychology in handling it. One dominant theory was that of his teacher A.W. Volkmann, who held that we localize sensations through nerve endings, so that the object is in that place where it stimulates the nerves. But that theory worked only for tactile sensations, not for visual and auditory ones, whose objects do not directly touch the nerve endings. Even worse, the theory seemed to assume what it intended to explain: that we already have the power to locate sensations by looking for their place at the end of the nerves (SS 50; MP 340-1; #297).

<sup>89</sup> See *Medizinische Psychologie*, Buch II, Kap. 4, 325–452, ##285–384. Lotze expounded the theory in three other places, each time somewhat differently. The first version appears in “Seele und Seelenleben”, *Kleine Schriften* I, 50–80; the second in *Mikrokosmos*, Book III, chap. 2, I, 343–348; the final version in *Grundzüge der Psychologie*, Erster Theil, Kap. 4, 27–39.

<sup>90</sup> On the reception of Lotze's theory, see W.R. Woodward, ‘From Association to Gestalt: The Fate of Hermann Lotze's Theory of Spatial Perception, 1846–1920’, *Isis* 249 (1978), 572–582.

<sup>91</sup> KrV, B 208.

<sup>92</sup> See Lotze's formulation of the problem in MP 328; #287; and GP 29–30, §5.

The central assumption of Lotze's theory is that there is a unique feeling or impression corresponding to each point where a stimulus strikes tactile or visual nerves.<sup>93</sup> Since this feeling or impression is singular, unique for each point of the stimulus, it serves as a marker or sign of its location. This feeling or impression accompanies each sensation—it is an “ancillary impression” (*Nebeneindruck*)—but it is also independent of its content. Hence it will mark the same position no matter what particular sense content occupies it. Lotze thinks that we can postulate such impressions because, to see a definite point in the visual field, the eye needs to move in a definite and precise way, so that each eye movement responding to a definite stimulus has its own unique direction and coordinates (MP 356–357; #311). The ancillary impression that serves as the local sign is therefore the result of a specific eye movement which has its unique direction, speed and energy. To locate a point in space, the soul relates one sign to others, by finding its place within a series or continuum of ancillary feelings or impressions. Assume, for example, a uniform red surface R in the visual field. How does the mind distinguish different points on R if the sensations themselves are of a uniform red quality? For each point on R where the soul focuses its attention, it has a distinctive feeling arising from moving its eye to just that point. For the distinct points A, B and C there is a distinctive accompanying feeling or impression, a, b, and c, so that a serves as a sign for A, b as sign for B, and c as a sign for C. We know that A, B and C appear in that definite spatial order—i.e., B is in the middle of A and C—because whenever we move the eyes across R the accompanying feelings or impressions of B is between A and C.

The mechanism of the local sign, Lotze further explains, consists in the association of two elements.<sup>94</sup> First, the *physical* process necessary to produce a definite sense quality or content, viz., just this tone of red, this degree of warmth; and, second, the accompanying *mental* process that is the same for any sense quality but different for each individual point of its genesis. We need the second element—a feeling for each point of space distinct from the content—because a spatial point can be occupied by any content and is indifferent to them.<sup>95</sup> The local sign performs its task, then, because it is indifferent to quality or content but distinctive for each position.

The theory seems artificial and contrived, as Lotze himself conceded (MP 360; #314). Where are these ancillary feelings or impressions? We seem to have as much problem identifying them as the locations themselves. When we move our eyes across a visual field, we do not seem to have different feelings or impressions for each point across it; we seem to feel rather one continuous sensation. Lotze's theory seems to be derived from an analogy with tactile sensation.<sup>96</sup> When different regions on the surface of the skin are pressed, we feel different kinds of sensations, so that each sensation seems to mark its distinct region. Lotze wants to assume something analogous for

<sup>93</sup> Cf. *Medizinische Psychologie*, 330–331; #289; and *Grundzüge der Psychologie*, 31, §6.

<sup>94</sup> *Mikrokosmos*, I, 347.

<sup>95</sup> *Medizinische Psychologie*, 330–331; #289.

<sup>96</sup> See “Seele und Seelenleben”, 64, 72.

visual perception, which would be the feelings involved in muscular movements of the eyes and the effort involved in focusing attention on specific points. But empirical evidence for these analogues is missing. We seem to see many points at once in one movement or act of attention; and when we move our eyes and change our focus from one point to another, there is no obvious impression or feeling to distinguish them. Lotze attempted to reply to these objections, first by insisting that the impressions or feelings could be subconscious, and then by noting that they were later replaced by habit which involved only a *potentiality* or *disposition* to recall them (SS 61; MP 359, 369; ##313, 319).

Another even more telling objection is that the theory does not seem to generate spatial so much as temporal position. Assuming that there are distinctive markers or signs for different stimuli, they would indeed locate sensations in a unique place in some order; but why is that order spatial? If the markers or signs are only *intensive* qualities, how indeed is it that they generate *extensive* ones? Lotze had made this objection against Herbart's own theory of spatial perception; but it seems to apply in equal measure to his own. Lotze's response to this point is that he does not attempt to construct spatial order as such but only a specific order within space. The theory assumes that we do perceive things in space; all that it attempts to do is to locate particular things within that space.<sup>97</sup> Regarding space in general, Lotze accepts Kant's theory that we have an a priori intuition of space; it is only the perception of particular spatial relations that arises from experience.<sup>98</sup> But this reply basically abandoned the whole attempt to explain how the perception of intensive magnitudes became extensive; by appealing to an a priori intuition, Lotze effectively admitted that the perception of space was something primitive and inexplicable.

Lotze's theory of local signs has given him a reputation as an empiricist regarding the theory of spatial perception.<sup>99</sup> But the label is misleading, not only because Lotze adopts Kant's general theory of space as an a priori intuition, but also because he insists, unlike most empiricists, that even specific spatial order is constructed rather than given. Although Lotze does hold, following the realist strand of his thinking, that there are specific spatial relations independent of consciousness, he still insists that the mind re-creates this order. As he puts it, it is one thing for there to be order in our world, and it is quite another to explain how we perceive it (SS 55; MP 327–328, #286).

## 6. Panpsychism and Spiritualism

Though it occurs with little fanfare and in an unlikely place, Lotze's affirmation of "spiritualism" in the *Medicinische Psychologie* marks a major breakthrough in his

<sup>97</sup> See "Seele und Seelenleben", 61–62, 70; *Medicinische Psychologie*, 334–335; #292.

<sup>98</sup> See "Seele und Seelenleben", p. 62; *Medicinische Psychologie*, 335, 336; #293

<sup>99</sup> Boring, *History of Experimental Psychology*, 257. Boring later corrected this view somewhat, noting that Lotze was "more a compromiser and synthesizer" on the nativism empiricism debate. See his *Sensation and Perception in the History of Experimental Psychology* (New York: Irvington Publishers, 1942), p. 233.

intellectual development. It was the first statement of his mature philosophical position. “Spiritualism” will later become Lotze’s signature doctrine, which he will distinguish from not only dualism and materialism but also from idealism itself.<sup>100</sup> His initial formulation of the doctrine in *Medizinische Psychologie* is inchoate and crude. Lotze puts it forward as the view “that spirit alone is primary existence, and that matter is to be seen as secondary” (61; #48). It later becomes clear from the context, however, that spiritualism is essentially panpsychism, i.e., the doctrine that substance, or the inner nature or essence of anything, consists in spirit or soul.

Lotze’s declaration of spiritualism in the *Medizinische Psychologie* is all the more remarkable because it marks a reversal from an earlier stance toward panpsychism. He had affirmed something close to panpsychism in his early *Tautelmann*; but in his later Leipzig years he had moved away from it, replacing it with a much more cautious attitude. In “Leben, Lebenskraft” Lotze was careful to distinguish the organic view of nature from the thesis that everything in nature is animate or has a soul; nature could be an organism in structure, he argued, even though some things within it are only dead matter.<sup>101</sup> Even as late as the *Allgemeine Physiologie* Lotze refused to make the leap to panpsychism, which he still found much too speculative.<sup>102</sup> But in *Medizinische Psychologie* Lotze casts aside his inhibitions, taking the plunge into the deep and heady waters of panpsychism. What had been an impossibility in “Seele und Seelenleben”, and a possibility in *Allgemeine Physiologie*, has now become a reality. Yet we must remember that, on this important point, Lotze’s development was circular. Ultimately, he was re-embracing, though now on a more sophisticated philosophical level, his old faith in *Tautelmann* that everything in nature is alive.

This remarkable development is puzzling. Why did Lotze affirm panpsychism in 1852 after having rejected it in 1843? What made him change his mind on such a central issue? The question is crucial since it concerns the development of one of Lotze’s central and characteristic doctrines. Yet answering it is not easy. Lotze does not explain his rationale for spiritualism in the *Medizinische Psychologie*, where the theory is introduced briefly and suddenly, as if from nowhere, to address the problem of mental-physical interaction, and then dropped in later sections. Lotze will give the theory a more systematic exposition only in the third volume of *Mikrokosmos*, which would

<sup>100</sup> One of the few scholars to note a fundamental change in Lotze’s thinking during the late 1840s is Fritz Bamberger in his brilliant but erratic *Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des Wertproblems in der Philosophie des 19. Jahrhunderts. I. Lotze* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1924), 67–8, 72. Bamberger contends that Lotze began to move away from the holism of absolute idealism when he ascribed more reality to each individual thing and when he treated each individual as an end in itself. Though Bamberger is correct in noting such a change in Lotze’s views, the shift he describes does not take place until much later in *Mikrokosmos*, a shift which we will describe in section 19 below. As late as 1852 Lotze explicitly reaffirms Hegelian holism in the *Medizinische Psychologie*, p. 159, #145. In any case, Bamberger misses the great importance of Lotze’s panpsychism in providing a foundation for the reality of the individual; and he fails to see the important change involved in Lotze’s move toward spiritualism.

<sup>101</sup> “Leben, Lebenskraft”, *Kleine Schriften*, I, 160–161. See section 7 of this chapter.

<sup>102</sup> *Allgemeine Physiologie*, 120–122.

not appear until 1864. This leaves us wondering all the more, then, what happened between 1843 and 1852 to explain such an important shift in Lotze's thinking. Since Lotze himself offers no explanation, we have to reconstruct his reasoning from a few scraps of evidence.

The whole question of panpsychism was reopened in dramatic fashion for Lotze in the late 1840s by his old teacher, Fechner. By early 1844, just as Lotze was planning to move to Göttingen, Fechner began to recover from his nervous breakdown. And with redemption came epiphany. When he began to see again, Fechner went into his garden and saw the plants and flowers with fresh eyes. All of creation seemed alive, delighted to greet his newborn spirit. It was as if the flowers were speaking to him! So Fechner was now completely convinced: plants too have souls! He resolved to persuade the entire world of this revelation, which he duly did in a remarkable book, his *Nanna oder über die Seelenleben der Pflanze*, which first appeared in 1848.<sup>103</sup> Fechner does not make a general case for panpsychism in *Nanna* but expressly limits himself to demonstrating that plants have souls. Still, he raises the general question: What limits are there to the soul, to what things in nature is it attributable? We have no good reason at all, he argues, for denying this concept to plants. Plants have souls very unlike our own, of course, but they still have souls all the same. They too have an individual identity; they too have desires and feelings; and they too even have consciousness (17).

The great charm and value of *Nanna* lies in Fechner's ability to make a serious philosophical case for what seems at first sight like a fantasy; he forces us to rethink an issue which perhaps for too many of us is closed. Fechner points out some of the arbitrary reasoning behind the modern western dogma—he loves to point out its cultural origins and limitations—that only humans and animals have souls. Plants have the same living structures as humans and animals—they too are organized into cells and go through processes of birth, growth and development—so why should we not attribute souls to them? Of course, there are great differences between their biological structure and ours; but these differences do not mean that they have no souls, only that they have different kinds of souls from our own (9). We are prone to drawing much too drastic lines through the continuum of nature, Fechner warns, as if only the complete possession of a limited set of characteristics were necessary to have a soul. But with what right do we draw such a line? We think the power to move from place to place is central to having a soul; but plants have the power to move in one and the same place, because they grow upwards toward the sunlight. Why does that not suffice for having a power of motion? Does having a soul depend on having only one kind of motion, namely, the locomotion of animals? That seems utterly arbitrary. The argument continues relentlessly in this vein.

<sup>103</sup> Gustav Theodor Fechner, *Nanna oder über die Seelenleben der Pflanze* (Leipzig: Voß, 1848). The book went through three more editions in 1899, 1903, and 1908. All references in parentheses are to 1908 edition.

In 1851 Fechner took his argument to a higher level yet in another remarkable work, his *Zend-Avesta*.<sup>104</sup> Here he comes closer to a general panpsychism, denying any hard distinction between life and matter, and making the case for attributing souls even to planets and stars. We first learn that the earth is a spirit, the source of all life upon it. We then discover that the entire universe consists in concentric psychic spheres, beginning with the simple cells, then ascending to plants, man, planets, stars and finally God, who is the spirit who encompasses everything. There are angels standing between man and the higher orbits, and after death we humans ascend to their realm. All the fantasies of “Dr. Mises”, it seemed, had now become serious cosmology. Though *Nanna* had its merits, it seemed to many that Fechner had fallen off the deep end in *Zend-Avesta*, which was regarded as a pathetic remnant of his illness.<sup>105</sup>

Unfortunately, we know nothing about Lotze’s reaction to the *Zend-Avesta*. Perhaps he thought silence was the best way to honor his old teacher. We do know in detail, however, what he thought of *Nanna*. In 1850, only a year before publishing his *Medicinische Psychologie*, he wrote a review of the work for the *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeigen*.<sup>106</sup> Lotze praised Fechner for having raised anew the question of “the extent of the realm of the soul”, which, he stressed, is of “great importance for the completion of our worldview”. While he conceded that Fechner’s arguments were successful in showing the *possibility* that plants had souls, he did not believe that they were conclusive in showing such *reality*. He also did not agree that plants had souls in the strong sense that Fechner had attributed to them, viz., that they have conscious desires and feelings; it is more likely, he maintained, that plants have only subconscious feelings. It is striking, however, that Lotze’s main criticism of Fechner is that he was not bold enough. Although Fechner had understandably limited his argument to showing that plants had souls, there were deeper metaphysical reasons for thinking that all reality is alive. What these reasons were Lotze could not explain in the confines of a review. We are now left wondering, however, what they might be.

In his *Medicinische Psychologie* Lotze gives us a strong hint. After declaring once again that it is necessary to go “far beyond” Fechner (133; #119), Lotze gives us some idea about why we should do so. It is necessary to realize, he suggests, that the concepts of matter and force themselves have a psychic basis. If this were so, the case for panpsychism could be indeed concluded. Somehow, then, in a way still unspecified, Lotze held that the rationale for panpsychism lay in the realm of *Naturphilosophie*, and more specifically in the philosophical treatment of physical nature. It is no easy matter, however, to follow this lead, because, though Lotze frequently lectured on *Naturphilosophie* in the 1840s and early 1850s, he published nothing on the subject.

<sup>104</sup> Gustav Theodor Fechner, *Zend-Avesta oder über die Dinge des Himmels und des Jenseits, Vom Standpunkt der Naturbetrachtung* (Leipzig: Voß, 1851).

<sup>105</sup> On the reception of *Zend-Avesta*, see Lasswitz, *Fechner*, 64–67.

<sup>106</sup> *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeigen*, 167 (1850), 1660–1667; reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* II, 505–512.



We get a good indication about the direction of Lotze's thinking from his review of another work by Fechner, his 1855 *Über die physikalische und philosophische Atomlehre*.<sup>107</sup> The review is significant because it discusses in depth Lotze's own views about the essence of matter. Fechner's work was first and foremost a defense of atomism against the objections of *Naturphilosophen*, who had advocated the dynamic view of matter. Remarkably, the author of *Zend-Avesta* had made yet another *volte-face*, now arguing in favor of a strict clinical empiricism, one so antiseptic that it virtually denied that there is any mystery to nature whatsoever.<sup>108</sup> Although Lotze accepted the defense of atomism, he believed that Fechner had misrepresented the dynamic view of matter, which stood in sore need of a defense. Lotze makes it clear that there is a problem with the concept of matter as it is traditionally conceived in atomism: it treats atoms as simples yet it also assumes that they occupy space. This is problematic, however, because space is divisible *ad infinitum*. So if atoms are in space how can they be simple? To avoid this problem, it is necessary to assume that atoms are unextended points, and that they come to occupy space only by virtue of their inherent forces. In making this point Lotze revealed his sympathy for Kant's dynamic conception of matter, especially its early version as outlined in the *Monadologia physica* rather than the later *Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften*.<sup>109</sup> The young Kant had rightly seen, Lotze argues, that the occupation of space cannot be taken as a primitive, and that it has to be derived from something more basic to matter, namely, its possession of attractive and repulsive forces, whose interactions produce a common space.

Lotze's defense of Kant's dynamism takes us one important step in the direction of his spiritualism. It allows us to see why Lotze believed that matter, understood as something extended, cannot be taken as a primitive. But, to understand the basis of his spiritualism, we still need to go further. For we now know only that the essence of matter is not extension; but we still do not know why it must be psychic. This second step is indeed difficult because it is also very controversial. In his *Anfangsgründe* Kant himself had drawn a sharp line between his dynamism and hylozoism, which assumed that dynamic forces are vital.<sup>110</sup> Although matter consists in force, it is still not vital, Kant argued, because it is inert, moving only if acted upon; in other words, it does not have the power of a living being to move itself. The step from dynamism to hylozoism, Kant darkly warned, is "*der Tod aller Naturphilosophie*".

It was just this step, however, that Lotze believed he had to take. For him, it was not the death but the birth of *Naturphilosophie*. Why? We can begin to understand

<sup>107</sup> Gustav Theodor Fechner, *Über die physikalische und philosophische Atomlehre* (Leipzig: Mendelsohn, 1855). Lotze's review appeared in the *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeigen* 109–112 (1855), 1081–1112. It is reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* III, 215–238.

<sup>108</sup> See Fechner, *Atomlehre*, vi, 83–118.

<sup>109</sup> Lotze's deferential treatment of Kant in his review of Fechner contrasts with his more critical attitude toward his dynamism in his *Metaphysik*, 222–223, §52.

<sup>110</sup> Kant, *Schriften*, IV, 544.

Lotze's reasoning on this issue if we take into account his reflections on a perennial philosophical problem: the *principium individuationis*. What makes an individual thing just this thing and no other? That classical issue had been central to Leibniz's intellectual development, and Lotze deliberately goes down the path of his great predecessor. There are indications from his writings in the late 1840s and early 1850s that Lotze had already anticipated his mature doctrine, which he expounds for the first time in the second and third volumes of *Mikrokosmos*.<sup>111</sup> According to that doctrine, the dynamic conception of matter makes it necessary to analyze each thing into its characteristic ways of acting. Forces are not mysterious properties or occult qualities somehow inhering in a substratum; rather, they are specific manners of acting which are formulable in terms of laws. The individual thing is not, however, a mere sum or conjunction of these laws; rather, it is their whole or unity. This unified whole, which systematizes all the characteristic ways of acting of a thing, is what Lotze calls its "idea". Lotze's "idea" is essentially what Leibniz called the "notion" of each thing.<sup>112</sup> From thus reflecting upon the notion of an individual, Lotze had come essentially to the same conclusion as Leibniz, whose doctrines he expressly rehabilitates.

We have come much closer to Lotze's panpsychism. But we are still not there yet. We can now see that the essence of an individual thing is intelligible or rational, that there is some general idea behind its essence, a systematic structure behind all its forms of acting in the world. But the question still remains: what brings the idea into existence? An idea by itself is not creative; ideas do not act; and they have no power to come into existence on their own. Lotze was fully aware of this problem, which posed a fundamental difficulty for his entire philosophy. We have seen how in his earlier works he had ascribed a merely *legislative* power to the world of ideas; they could not act on their own but could come into existence only through the *executive* power of mechanical causes. It therefore seemed that Lotze had left a dualism between the realm of the ideal and the real, so that it seemed impossible for the ideal to play a causal role in the world. Lotze's solution to this problem, which we can already see at work in the *Medizinische Psychologie*,<sup>113</sup> is to postulate the existence of a subject behind each idea of an individual thing. In other words, the individual is not simply an activity but something that acts; it is not simply *actum* but *agens*. This agent or thing that acts must be a subject because only a subject has the power to be aware of ideas, to act according to them and for their sake; in other words, it alone can make ideas an active force in the world.

Spiritualism was thus Lotze's way of giving agency to ideas, of giving a causal role to the ideal realm. As such it was his solution to the dualism between ideal and reality,

<sup>111</sup> We will examine that doctrine in more detail below, section 19 below. On earlier indications of that doctrine, see *Streitschriften*, 45–46.

<sup>112</sup> Leibniz, *Discours de Métaphysique*, §8.

<sup>113</sup> See *Medizinische Psychologie*, 75, #60; 92, #78; 127, #111.

his means of bridging the gap between the legislative and executive powers of nature. We will later examine his argument that idealism, if it is to overcome this dualism, has to be modified in the direction of spiritualism.<sup>114</sup> Though Lotze will continue to place himself in the idealist tradition, he thinks that the tradition has to be emended and qualified as spiritualism.

<sup>114</sup> We will describe this change in detail in Part II, chapter 5, section 6.

## *Mikrokosmos* (Göttingen, 1854–1864)

### 1. Lotze and the Materialism Controversy

Although Lotze's demon was the urge for recognition, he was a shy and modest man, one who enjoyed above all privacy. The last thing he wanted was controversy, which would ruin the tranquility so necessary for his stability and creativity. But if Lotze shunned controversy, controversy sought him. In the 1850s he became caught in the centre of one of the greatest intellectual debates of his age, the so-called "materialism controversy".<sup>1</sup> It was this debate that, for better or worse, gave him his place in German intellectual history. The opponents of materialism latched onto Lotze as their spokesman, while the materialists attacked him as one of the chief apostles of "spiritualism", which meant not his own metaphysical doctrine but something far less subtle and sophisticated: a belief in the existence of spirits. Lotze, it seemed to materialist and anti-materialist alike, was a conservative defender of Christian values. In a metaphor that he could never live down, he was branded, for reasons we shall soon see, "a speculative Struwwelpeter", i.e., that naughty boy with overgrown fingernails and absurdly long red hair used to scare German children into good grooming habits.<sup>2</sup>

We can assign a definite time and place for the official beginning of the materialism controversy. It was September 18, 1854, in Göttingen. It was then and there that Rudolph Wagner, Lotze's patron and head of the Physiological Institute in Göttingen, gave his opening address to the thirty-first *Versammlung deutsche Naturforscher und Ärzte*. Wagner's address, entitled *Menschenschöpfung und Seelensubstanz*,<sup>3</sup> was an *ad hoc* piece that he had hurriedly and reluctantly thrown together just days before the conference at the request of some of its leading participants. It was only appropriate, they believed, for the host to hold the opening address. They got more than they bargained for.

<sup>1</sup> For more general accounts of the controversy, see Gregory, *Scientific Materialism* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1972), 72–79, 145–212; Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*. Zweite Auflage (Iserlohn: Baedeker, 1875), II, 84–114; and Annette Wittkau-Horgby, *Materialismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 77–114.

<sup>2</sup> The metaphor, often cited, originated with Carl Vogt, *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft*, Vierter Auflage (Gießen: Ricker, 1856) 91, note.

<sup>3</sup> Rudolph Wagner, *Menschenschöpfung und Seelensubstanz. Ein anthropologischer Vortrag, gehalten in der ersten öffentlichen Sitzung der 31. Versammlung deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte zu Göttingen am 18. Sept. 1854* (Göttingen: Wigand, 1854).

To have maximum effect, Wagner chose a topic from anthropology that he believed would interest everyone: the origin of man and his fate after death. The main question he wanted to pose for the participants to the conference was whether natural science had been able to shed any light on these grand old questions. It was his own personal view, he openly confessed, that all the latest research had not been able to demonstrate or refute the Biblical doctrine that all human beings came from an original single pair (17). There were some natural scientists who held that, given the variety of human races, there must have been different original pairs, an Adam and Eve for each race; but they lacked concrete empirical evidence for their views. All the data from the most recent empirical investigations did not contradict the Biblical doctrine at all, which therefore remained “inviolable” (17). Regarding the grand question about the fate of man after death, Wagner asked what the latest physiology had to say about the human soul. He noted how psychology was becoming more and more the object of natural science, and less and less the preserve of theology and philosophy. And here he believed that he had to issue a warning about the direction of the latest scientific research. Some physiologists were inclined toward materialist doctrine, and they were not only doubting but denying the existence of the soul and free will (18). The problem with this new materialism, Wagner intoned, is that it was undermining a belief crucial to the moral and political order: the belief in the immortality of the soul. The Christian doctrine of a moral world order—a divine providence that rewarded the virtuous and punished the vicious—rested on this belief. Whoever wanted to preserve morality and religion among “the de-Christianized masses” should strive to uphold that belief at all costs (26–27). Wagner then closed his address with the plea: natural scientists should consider where their research is heading; they should refrain from spreading doctrines damaging to morals, religion and state.

To give authority to his harangue, Wagner cited the writings of someone else now attending the conference, someone who had also expressed similar consternation about materialism. Without mentioning Lotze by name, who must have blushed and shrank into his seat, he cited a long passage from *Medicinische Psychologie*.<sup>4</sup> Thus Lotze, without will and foreknowledge, and in the presence of hundreds in a filled auditorium, was enlisted into the campaign against materialism. Thus the speculative Struwwelpeter was born!

Judging from its brisk sales,<sup>5</sup> Wagner’s address had an impact well beyond the confines of the conference. Many participants were shocked by Wagner’s boldness in obtruding moral and political considerations into what was supposed to be a purely academic conference. Yet he had raised questions on the minds of many, ones difficult

<sup>4</sup> The passage is from *Medicinische Psychologie*, 30, #18.

<sup>5</sup> Wagner stated in the preface to his *Ueber Wissen und Glauben* that *Menschenschöpfung und Seelensubstanz* had sold 3,000 copies in a few weeks.

to ignore. Namely, is natural science heading toward materialism? And if so, what are the consequences for moral and religious belief? These questions were reminiscent of those posed some seventy years earlier by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi during his famous dispute with Moses Mendelssohn about Lessing's pantheism. It seemed to Jacobi in the 1780s that the new natural sciences were leading inevitably toward the atheism and fatalism of Spinozism, which he regarded as the most consistent and rigorous form of naturalism. Jacobi confronted his contemporaries with a powerful dilemma: either naturalistic atheism and fatalism or a *salto mortale*, a leap of faith in a personal creator and freedom. With no less urgency and bluster, Wagner was *in effect* posing a similar dilemma for his generation with regard to the beliefs in divine creation and the immortality of the soul.<sup>6</sup>

Wagner's opening address was only his first salvo in what had now become his holy war against materialism. Only a few weeks after the conference, and in response to the controversy aroused by his address, he published his *Ueber Wissen und Glauben*,<sup>7</sup> which stated his general position regarding the classic issue of reason versus faith. In this piece Wagner re-affirmed his view that the latest results of the natural sciences give no evidence against belief in the existence of immortality. While there is no proof for this belief, there is also no disproof of it either, so that the believer is free to keep his faith with no fear that science stands against him (8–9). Wagner then put forward his main rationale for this point: the classic double-truth doctrine of Protestantism.<sup>8</sup> According to that doctrine, faith and reason operate in separate spheres, neither contradicts the other as long as each stays within its boundaries. Faith should not pronounce on matters of science, which we can know through sense experience and reason; but science should not presume on matters of faith, which we know through the Bible, the record of divine revelation. Faith was not for Wagner simply a matter of belief, but, as Luther and Calvin had taught, a kind of immediate experience and certainty (14–16). Faith gives us knowledge of supernatural things just as reason does for natural things; and just as a blind man should not presume to judge what he cannot see, so the non-believing natural scientist should not dare to doubt what the Christian believes through the eyes of faith. Despite insisting that faith and science should respect their boundaries, Wagner had to admit that there were "points of contact" (*Berührungspunkte*) between them, and in these cases conflict was difficult to avoid. These cases concerned issues about the origins of things or matters of historical revelation, viz., miracles (18). The Bible, for example, stated that the earth was only thousands of years old, whereas geological

<sup>6</sup> I stress "in effect" because Wagner believed that he could avoid such a dilemma; but it is arguable if he really could.

<sup>7</sup> *Ueber Wissen und Glauben, Fortsetzung der Betrachtungen über Menschenschöpfung und Seelensubstanz* (Göttingen: Wigand, 1854).

<sup>8</sup> The *locus classicus* for this doctrine is Luther's disputation *De sententia: Verbum caro factus est*, in Luther, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe Weimarer Ausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1883), XXXIX/2, 3–33. On Luther's doctrine, see my *The Sovereignty of Reason* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 24–30.

and historical evidence showed that it had to be much older than that. Who was one to believe in such cases? Science or faith? One must practice “double bookkeeping” was Wagner’s answer (20). That meant that one should still strive as far as possible to resolve the conflict by assigning the apparently contradictory views to their separate spheres. One should limit one’s conclusions as a natural scientist strictly to the empirical evidence; and one should not reject matters of faith but wait for their eventual reconciliation. It was plain, however, that this solution was nothing more than a stop-gap, another kind of *salto mortale*, a leap of faith in the eventual reconciliation of faith and reason.

A major intellectual issue is a necessary condition of a good public controversy; but it is rarely a sufficient one. To attract public attention, it needs other ingredients, such as bile, pathos and scandal. These the materialism controversy offered in spades. The history behind Wagner’s opening address lay in his bitter quarrel with one very angry young man: Karl Vogt.<sup>9</sup> It is no exaggeration to say that Vogt was one of the most fascinating figures of nineteenth-century German intellectual history. A corpulent man with a savage wit and boundless energy, he was an intellectual raging bull, a formidable opponent in any dispute.<sup>10</sup> Having studied chemistry with Liebig at Gießen in the 1830s, Vogt had received a doctorate in medicine and then gradually became a journalist. He had acquired a reputation for himself in the 1840s by publishing a number of popular books on geology and physiology. These works had revealed a growing sympathy for materialist views, especially a denial of creation *ex nihilo* and a belief in a complete naturalism.<sup>11</sup> A man of decided left-wing political views, Vogt had hung out with Bakunin and Proudhon in Paris in the early 1840s and he had engaged in revolutionary activity in Berne in 1846.<sup>12</sup> In 1848 he was elected as a member to the Frankfurt Parliament, where he stood on the extreme left of the Assembly. Predictably, Vogt’s radical views got him into trouble, and after the collapse of the Revolution he found himself dismissed from his post in Gießen. From his exile in Italy he would rail against the German establishment, especially its universities. No one represented the worst side of that establishment, in Vogt’s bilious view, than one professor in Göttingen: Rudolph Wagner. In his *Bilder aus dem Thierleben* Vogt singled out Wagner as the worst German science had to offer, a superstitious theist whose beliefs set limits to his research.<sup>13</sup> Vogt’s attack was not entirely unprovoked, for in a series of articles in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* Wagner had already warned the public about the dangerous materialist tendencies of Vogt’s writings. In his opening address he cited long passages from Vogt’s *Physiologische Briefe* to the effect that there is no free will, that

<sup>9</sup> On Vogt, see Gregory, *Scientific Materialism*, 51–79; and Wittkau-Horgby, *Materialismus*, 77–95.

<sup>10</sup> See the pencil sketch in Gregory, *Scientific Materialism*, 63.

<sup>11</sup> Vogt states his *credo* fully and openly for the first time in his *Ocean und Mittelmeer: Reisebriefe* (Frankfurt: Literarische Anstalt, 1848), 9–26.

<sup>12</sup> See Vogt’s own vivid account of these activities in *Ocean und Mittelmeer I*, 165–200.

<sup>13</sup> Carl Vogt, *Bilder aus dem Thierleben* (Frankfurt: Literarische Anstalt, 1852), 367.

the mind is nothing more than the activity of the brain, and that there is no such thing as the immortality of the soul.<sup>14</sup>

After hearing about Wagner's address in Göttingen, Vogt became enraged. Wagner had the nerve to use a public podium to attack him when he was not there to defend himself! When Wagner promised in a later session to discuss the question of the materiality of the soul, he abruptly cancelled it, claiming that he was suffering from "a sudden cold". That seemed the excuse of a coward; Wagner was withdrawing from the very fight he had started. Vogt was determined that he not escape so easily. Now that Wagner had thrown down the gauntlet, he would pick it up. And so in a few heated and inspired weeks in the autumn of 1854 Vogt wrote a blistering and brilliant polemic against Wagner, his *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft*, which first appeared in 1855.<sup>15</sup> The first part is a vicious personal attack on Wagner's moral and intellectual integrity. It indicts Wagner for his sloppiness as a scientist, for his allowing his personal beliefs to interfere with his research, and for his temerity in taking credit for publications for which he had done little or nothing. The second part addresses the major intellectual issues raised by Wagner. Vogt found Wagner's distinction between the realms of science and faith utterly artificial and arbitrary. There was overwhelming empirical evidence *against* the two beliefs that Wagner was so eager to protect: that human origins came from a single original couple, and that there is an immaterial soul. Regarding the first belief, all the evidence from geography and anatomy showed such differences between the various human races that each must have had its own original pair; it was also evident from geology that the age of the earth was much older than anything said in the Bible, and that human beings originated much earlier than four thousand years ago. So, rather than standing inviolate above empirical verification or falsification, the Biblical doctrines were flatly contrary to the facts; in that case it was clear that one had to side with science against them (81–83). Regarding the belief in an immaterial soul, the latest physiological research gave no evidence whatsoever for the existence of a soul separate from the brain; on the contrary, it showed how closely mental activity is tied to brain functions. If the brain were injured, mental activity would cease; and it was even possible to identify specific parts of the brain that were used for specific mental functions (107–14). While Vogt admitted that it was difficult to explain how brain processes gave rise to consciousness and mental events, he insisted that all the evidence showed the utter dependence of consciousness upon brain processes (109). Given such a fact, it was not likely that human beings possessed an immortal soul that somehow survived the death of the body (121–122). Against all Wagner's warnings, Vogt then declared that he had no fear in drawing the appropriate conclusions from

<sup>14</sup> Wagner, *Menschenschöpfung und Seelensubstanz*, 20–21. Without mentioning Vogt or his work by name, Wagner cites passages from the second edition of Vogt's *Physiologische Briefe* (Gießen: Ricker, 1854), 322–323, 626–637.

<sup>15</sup> Karl Vogt, *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft: Eine Streitschrift gegen Hofrath Wagner in Göttingen* (Gießen: Ricker, 1856).



all these facts: that the religious beliefs were nothing but superstitions. To uphold these beliefs when they are contrary to all the plain evidence of science is to take a desperate leap into the irrational.

Lying just underneath the surface of Vogt's dispute with Wagner were their clashing politics. While Vogt was a radical who had fought for democracy in Bern and Frankfurt, Wagner was a reactionary whose fondest hope was a return to the monarchic rule of the *ancien régime*. It was indeed telling that, at the close of his speech, Wagner cited, and vowed to uphold, the political testament of a leading conservative statesman and publicist, Joseph Maria von Radowitz.<sup>16</sup> The politics of Vogt and Wagner were decisive for their philosophical positions. Wagner wanted to uphold the beliefs in providence and immortality to legitimate the monarchy and to control "the de-Christianized masses"; Vogt intended to undermine these beliefs for just that reason: they were an ideological weapon to control the people, a veil of deception to prevent them from taking control over their own lives in a new democratic order.

The dispute between Vogt and Wagner soon became a public spectacle, having all the drama of a battle between worldviews. The materialism of the left wrestled against the theism of the right. Lotze looked upon it with horror. Though he was desperate to stand above the fray, both Wagner and Vogt did their best to drag him into it. Wagner not only cited Lotze in his opening address, but continued to refer to him in his *Glauben und Wissen*. Vogt referred many times to Lotze in *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft*,<sup>17</sup> and he even suggested that Lotze was Wagner's henchman, the hardhitting philosopher who could expose the fallacies behind materialism, "the speculative Struwwelpeter" to scare people into having the beliefs their parents told them they should have. Vogt even implied that the idea of a soul-substance was a common invention of Wagner and Lotze, "a special concoction of Göttingen scholasticism" (*ein besonderes Elaborat der Göttinger Schulmetaphysik*) (91–92n).

We know little about Lotze's participation in the Göttingen conference.<sup>18</sup> That he made preparations for it we know from his letters to Volkmann and Fechner, whom he invited to stay at his house for the duration of the meetings.<sup>19</sup> Lotze took a hand in organizing and monitoring some of the sessions. He appears to have been disappointed by the conference, because he complained to Hirzel about the dire state of recent physiological research.<sup>20</sup> Despite Vogt's provocations and Wagner's blandishments, Lotze did his best to remain aloof. Neither friend nor foe would he be. And with good reason. There was no reason to attack Vogt, for Lotze had already made

<sup>16</sup> *Menschenschöpfung und Seelensubstanz*, 26–27. Wagner does not name the author. I assume that it is Radowitz from the comments of Reclam and Vogt in *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft*, 33, 40. Vogt makes clear his political antipathy to Radowitz's views, 33.

<sup>17</sup> *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft*, 26, 32–33, 91–92n, 104–105, 109.

<sup>18</sup> Pester, Lotze, 213.

<sup>19</sup> See Lotze to Fechner, August 6, 1854, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 255, and Volkmann to Lotze, August 12, 1854, 256.

<sup>20</sup> See Lotze to Hirzel, October 2, 1854, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 258.

his views on materialism clear in his *Medizinische Psychologie*; and there was no reason to defend Wagner, for, at the end of the day, they really had little in common.<sup>21</sup> Vogt could not have been more wrong when he threw Lotze into the same pot as Wagner. For consider the differences between them. First, Wagner had defended a doctrine of the *divisibility* of the soul, according to which the child inherits part of each of its parents' souls; but the *indivisibility* of the soul had been Lotze's chief argument against materialism. Second, Wagner had insisted that the heart of his Christian worldview is dualism,<sup>22</sup> expressly excluding the idealism Lotze had championed. And, last but not least, Lotze did not accept Wagner's doctrine of "double bookkeeping", which he believed ended in an unsustainable metaphysical schizophrenia.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, on this last score, Wagner was aware of his differences with Lotze, against whom he would attempt to vindicate himself in *Glauben und Wissen*.<sup>24</sup> On top of all this, Wagner had an embarrassing confession to make: he admitted that he had little understanding of Lotze's metaphysics, complaining to a confidant that whenever he tried to read his *Medizinische Psychologie* he got a headache.<sup>25</sup>

Eventually, Lotze could not stay out of the fray. Vogt's dispute with Wagner was only the beginning of a much longer and more complex controversy, which would pull Lotze into its vortex. As it happened, Wagner's warnings backfired. Rather than frightening the materialists, they provoked them. Out of their closets they came, now marching headstrong, banners waving, in a thick phalanx to challenge the establishment. 1855, the very year Vogt published *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft*, also witnessed the appearance of two mighty materialist tomes: Heinrich Czolbe's *Neue Darstellung des Sensualismus* and Ludwig Büchner's *Kraft und Stoff*.<sup>26</sup> What Vogt had announced in a polemical context—that the natural sciences are heading inevitably toward materialism—Czolbe and Büchner would now defend in a more general and systematic manner. These works laid out the basic principles for a materialist worldview, arguing that it is based on nothing less than the empirical findings of the new natural sciences. Wagner's worst nightmare had become reality.

Such was Lotze's aversion to polemics and publicity that he would have happily ignored even these works. But their authors were not so complaisant. In *Kraft und Stoff* Büchner cited "the spiritualist-inclined Lotze" for stressing the connection of mental activity with the brain, implying that even he could see the point of the materialist

<sup>21</sup> The materialism controversy gave rise to a cooling of relations between Lotze and Wagner. Lotze had dedicated his *Allgemeine Physiologie* to Wagner; but when the first volume of *Mikrokosmos* appeared in 1856 he refused to send Wagner even a complimentary copy, even after Wagner had requested one! See Lotze to Solomon Hirzel, January 2, 1857, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 295.

<sup>22</sup> *Glauben und Wissen*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> See *Medizinische Psychologie*, 36, #25.

<sup>24</sup> *Glauben und Wissen*, 14. Vogt too noted these differences and had fun pointing them out to embarrass Wagner. See *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft*, 104–105.

<sup>25</sup> See Wagner's August 30, 1852, letter to Jacob Henle, as cited by Pester, *Lotze*, 210–211.

<sup>26</sup> Louis Büchner, *Kraft und Stoff* (Frankfurt: Meidinger, 1855); and Heinrich Czolbe, *Neue Darstellung des Sensualismus* (Leipzig: Costenoble, 1855).

doctrine.<sup>27</sup> Czolbe was much more provocative. In the preface to his *Neue Darstellung des Sensualismus* he stated that he regarded his work as “a kind of positive refutation” of Lotze’s views in *Medizinische Psychologie* (viii). He paid handsome tribute to Lotze as materialism’s worthiest critic; but he then went on to make a personal confession: that it was Lotze’s critique of vital powers in his *Allgemeine Pathologie* that was the inspiration for his own materialism! (203–204). Surely Lotze could not take it amiss, Czolbe wrote, if that critique were now extended into a whole worldview? If Lotze were only consistent, Czolbe implied, he too would be a materialist. For what was the soul but only another hypostasized vital power?

Czolbe’s *Neue Darstellung des Sensualismus* was a self-conscious attempt to provide a systematic foundation for materialism, or what its author calls (the terms are synonymous for him) “sensualism”. In his preface he complains that the work of Vogt, Feuerbach and Moleschott has been much too fragmentary and vague, and that, if not given a more precise meaning, their concept of matter will be no better than the concept of spirit (vi). The main goal of sensualism, Czolbe tells us, is “to exclude the supersensible”, where the supersensible is the spiritual, i.e., what cannot be perceived in principle by the senses (1, 60). Toward that end, Czolbe goes through all the disciplines—psychology, logic, physiology and physics—in a campaign to purge them once and for all of every vestige of the supersensible. Materialism thus means for Czolbe essentially empiricism, i.e., the doctrine that all knowledge originates in, and is based upon, sense perception or experience. The fundamental principle of his sensualism is therefore “intuitability” (*Anschaulichkeit*), i.e., the power to give a precise empirical meaning to concepts (2, 3). Czolbe gives such importance to empiricism not least because the chief redoubt of the idealist lies in epistemology, more specifically, in the claim that we have a priori concepts that owe their origin entirely to pure intellectual activity. Hence in his treatment of logic Czolbe attempts to trace concepts, judgments and inferences back to their origin in sense experience (52–65). Even the law of contradiction, he claims, owes its validity to the fact that we cannot unite in thought what we cannot perceive together in experience (60). After tracing all thinking back to sense perception, Czolbe then takes the next decisive step: he explains sense perception in terms of material processes. Perception consists in nothing more than vibrations in the nerves and brain (11–18), while consciousness is only the physical activity of the brain turning back on itself (27, 29). Even the more subtle and sophisticated processes of judging and reasoning arise from, and indeed consist in, physical processes (52). All in all, Czolbe’s work is a crude and naive catechism of materialism whose main merit lies in its attempt to spell out in definite terms what had been left programmatic by his predecessors.

<sup>27</sup> Büchner, *Kraft und Stoff*, 4th edition, 142. In a later edition, Büchner lumped Lotze together with Wagner for holding the doctrine of the divisibility of the soul. See *Kraft und Stoff*, 21st edition (Leipzig: Thomas, 1904), 298. This shows the extent of Büchner’s reading of Lotze, and his willingness to accept Vogt’s portrait of him.

Whatever its flaws, Lotze could not ignore Czolbe's work. After all, Czolbe claimed not only to have been inspired by Lotze but to have refuted him. He further implied that Lotze was a covert materialist who only needed to admit the consequences of his own principles. Such provocative claims and insinuations would have made detachment seem like indifference. And so, probably to avoid that very impression, Lotze replied with a lengthy review of Czolbe's work in the *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeigen*.<sup>28</sup>

Lotze's review is a nice epitome of his idealist principles and differences with materialism; it is also an interesting historical document in its own right because it anticipates later themes of Frege.<sup>29</sup> Lotze begins his review by stating that he finds it odd Czolbe virtually equates materialism with empiricism; after all, it is possible for a materialist, i.e., someone who believes in the sole reality of matter, to maintain the existence of innate principles and ideas (240). He also misses any proof on Czolbe's part that everything unperceptible and supersensible is obscurantist; after all, the most lucid intellectual activity is not perceptible by the senses (241). But leaving aside these points, Lotze focuses chiefly on Czolbe's empiricism, and especially his attempt to eliminate the supersensible from all intellectual activity. All Czolbe's efforts are doomed to utter failure, Lotze contends, for all thinking consists in the addition of something supersensible to the material of intuition (240). All that the senses show us consists in the succession and co-existence of qualitative determinations, and they reveal nothing about their *inner connections*, which are supplied by thought alone. To some extent, we can derive the principle of causality from experience, from the constant conjunction of impressions; but, as Kant famously argued, that is not enough: causality also attributes a *necessary connection* between impressions, and for that there is no corresponding impression (241). Even the most simple concepts, viz., that of a thing, arises from the activity of the mind, from uniting a manifold of representations, and in no sense is that unity given in the material of sensation (241). So far, then, Lotze's argument is basically a re-statement of Kant's famous reply to Hume, a timely reminder to the materialists that they had still had to learn a basic philosophical lesson: namely, that the universal and necessary connections of our most fundamental concepts cannot be derived from experience. Having taught Czolbe this lesson, Lotze then goes on to beat him with another Kantian stick: that empiricism cannot explain the unity of consciousness (242–243). Though Czolbe went to great lengths to explain thinking in material terms, to reduce it down to processes of association, he failed to ask *for whom* these processes exist (243). He insisted that consciousness has to be involved in each representation; but he had not considered that there needs to be a *single* self-consciousness throughout a series of representations. Lotze also took exception to Czolbe's materialist psychologism, his attempt to explain logical inference in terms of the cumulative result of brain processes. The meaning of the syllogism, Lotze

<sup>28</sup> *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeigen*, 153–55 (1855), 1521–1538; reprinted in *Kleine Schriften*, III, 238–250. All reference are to this later edition.

<sup>29</sup> On the importance of this review for Frege, see Sluga, *Frege*, 32.

explained, rests not on the fact that we add premises to infer a conclusion but in “the thought of the law that made this fact necessary” (246). No judgment consists simply in the conjunction of subject and predicate because the copula has the sense of “an inner non-sensible nexus that justifies their connection” (246). After making further points regarding Czolbe’s determinism and concept of matter, Lotze then declares that he can neither understand nor welcome his alleged role in converting Czolbe to materialism. While he eliminated the *Lebenskraft*, he did so only to replace it with other powers that are supersensible (250). Czolbe, he implies, has a very crude conception of the supersensible, conflating it with supernatural powers like telekinesis, viz., the power to move objects at a distance by the mind. But if this is what Czolbe means by the supersensible, he finds it hard to see what he has against it, for such a power is easily explicable in sensible terms. Having given Czolbe a drubbing, Lotze still closes his review with a noble gesture: the hope that it will help Czolbe’s efforts to get clear about his own principles. A gesture altogether fitting for a philosopher, one in remarkable contrast to all Wagner’s bluster!

The gesture was not in vain. Czolbe answered it by writing an entire tract in response to Lotze’s criticisms, his 1856 *Entstehung des Selbstbewußtseins*,<sup>30</sup> to which Lotze responded by reviewing Czolbe’s tract the following year.<sup>31</sup> For the most part Czolbe’s pamphlet simply restates his position without bringing forward new arguments. He stuck to his point that consciousness consists in the self-reverting motion of the brain. Lotze had objected that this could not be a sufficient analysis of consciousness, since circular motion can be found in purely physical phenomena, such as the turning of a wheel. Czolbe insisted, however, that he never intended to say that it was the only or a sufficient condition of consciousness; such activity also presupposes the complex chemical and physical structure of organisms (7). Regarding self-consciousness, Czolbe accepted Lotze’s point that it is necessary to admit a single self-awareness throughout a manifold of representations; but he denied that this self need be anything more than an abstraction (14); and he stressed that there is no reason to assume that it is spiritual (18). Though Lotze complained that Czolbe had not moved beyond his original position, on one important point Czolbe made a significant concession. This concerned the analysis of sense perception. In his introduction Czolbe scolded the materialists for not having done enough to examine the nature of sense perception, even though the whole case for materialism depended upon it (1). The problem was this: if Lotze were correct to argue that there is a logical gap between the stimulus for sensations and the content of sensations themselves, then the idealist would be right after all. It would not be possible to infer any resemblance between our representations and the external world, so that the basis for the belief in the reality of matter

<sup>30</sup> Heinrich Czolbe, *Entstehung des Selbstbewußtseins: Eine Antwort an Herrn Professor Lotze* (Leipzig: Costenoble, 1856). All references in parentheses are to this edition.

<sup>31</sup> “Recension von Heinrich Czolbe, *Entstehung des Selbstbewußtseins. Eine Antwort an Herrn Professor Lotze*”, *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeigen* 32 (1857), 313–320. Reprinted: *Kleine Schriften* III, 315–320.

would be undermined. It would then be necessary to admit something like a distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves—the starting point of Kant’s transcendental idealism! Czolbe then went on to admit that most of the materialists had done nothing to overcome this gap. Moleschott and Vogt, for example, could not explain how consciousness arises from, or is even like in content to, the chemical substances in the brain (15).

Though Czolbe could now clearly see this danger to his position, he still clung to it all the same. He now stated very clearly a basic premise behind his analysis of perception in the *Neue Darstellung*: that in the external stimuli of sensation, sensible qualities, i.e., what we perceive, are already *fully present* and *completely given* (14). In other words, Czolbe’s response to the problem was to affirm a kind of naive realism! Though Lotze had already dismissed this as an “old error”, because it failed to acknowledge the role of the subject’s cognitive and physiological activity in constituting experience, Czolbe went on to affirm it all the more passionately. While he could not give compelling evidence in its behalf, he went on to emphasize the advantages of his position: it allowed for an “ideal” or aesthetic dimension to nature, because all the sense qualities we perceive it to have really exist in it (16). In saying this, however, Czolbe virtually admitted that he had no evidence for his materialism, for the assumption that there are things existing apart from and prior to sense experience. All that lay between materialism and idealism, it seemed, was his naive realism.

Though Czolbe had not really converted to idealism in *Entstehung des Selbstbewußtseins*, he now realized how vulnerable materialism could be. He even conceded that if the materialist were not willing to accept naive realism, he might as well throw himself into the arms of the idealist (2, 15–16). But how long could Czolbe uphold this naive realism? Not very long, of course. So it was no surprise that in a later work, *Die Grenzen und der Ursprung der menschlichen Erkenntnis*, Czolbe confessed to the error of his materialist ways.<sup>32</sup> He now realized that materialism could not explain the reality of consciousness, and that there is indeed a gap between the external world and the content of perception. Czolbe’s admission of defeat was later seized upon by the neo-Kantians, who could now proclaim their idealism to be far from the antiquated metaphysics the materialists made it out to be.<sup>33</sup>

Though Lotze’s exchanges with Czolbe were his only direct involvement in the materialism controversy, they were from a broader perspective only the beginning. For even before the Göttingen conference Lotze had been hard at work writing his most ambitious book ever, and his ultimate contribution to the materialism controversy. So it is to that work that we must now turn.

<sup>32</sup> *Die Grenzen und der Ursprung der menschlichen Erkenntnis im Gegensatze zu Kant und Hegel* (Leipzig: Costenoble, 1865), vi.

<sup>33</sup> See Hans Vaihinger, “Die drei Phasen der Czolbeischen Naturalismus”, *Philosophisches Monatshefte* XII (1876), 1–31.

## 2. *Mikrokosmos*: Goals and Context

The culmination of Lotze's early intellectual development was his *Mikrokosmos*, which appeared in three volumes from 1856 to 1864.<sup>34</sup> This work was a synthesis of all his earlier concerns, an effort to forge them into a coherent system. Bearing the subtitle "*Versuch einer Anthropologie*" it was meant to be a new kind of anthropology whose intent was to understand man from his place in nature and history. But it also aimed to be more than that: a complete *Weltanschauung*, a new worldview, one based on the modern sciences but also true to enduring moral, religious and aesthetic values. In striving for such an ambitious goal Lotze was deliberately spurning the excessive specialization of his day and intentionally re-invoking the grander vistas of the *Goethezeit*.

*Mikrokosmos* was intended for a broad audience, and it was therefore written in a smooth and gracious style. Lotze wanted it to be "monumental", a work for everyone and the ages.<sup>35</sup> It was a gamble that paid off, at least for a while. For *Mikrokosmos* became Lotze's most successful book, one of the most widely read philosophical works in the second half of the nineteenth century. It went through several editions, and it was translated into many languages.

In his preface Lotze gives us a good idea about his intentions in writing *Mikrokosmos*. He tells us that his aim is to answer one grand question: What meaning does human life have in the cosmos as a whole? It is necessary to consider this question, he insists, in the light of all the latest advances of the sciences. At the end of the eighteenth century Herder had discussed it in his monumental *Ideen zu einer Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784–91), a work that Lotze makes the model for his own. However, the sciences had advanced enormously since Herder's day, especially chemistry and physiology, which were then only in their infancy. It is now necessary to create a new anthropology, Lotze thinks, one that will take into account the results of these new sciences. For Lotze, the best statement of modern cosmology was Alexander von Humboldt's *Kosmos*, a work he greatly admired.<sup>36</sup> His task would be to investigate the implications of Humboldt's work for human beings. What Humboldt had done for the world as a whole, the macrocosm, that Lotze will now do for human beings, the microcosm.

Lotze's self-advertisement, which appeared in 1856 in the *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeiger*, provides another interesting account of his intentions.<sup>37</sup> Here Lotze declares that his aim is to resolve the conflict of the natural sciences with morality and religion. He calls this conflict "an unnecessary torment" (*eine unnötige Qual*) because, however troubling, it is still resolvable in principle (305). There is no denying, though, that

<sup>34</sup> *Mikrokosmos. Ideen zur Naturgeschichte und Geschichte der Menschheit. Versuch einer Anthropologie* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1856–1864). All references in parentheses above will be to the fourth edition which appeared from 1884 to 1888. The work is divided into three volumes, designated by Roman numerals.

<sup>35</sup> See Lotze to Salomon Hirzel, May 3, 1856, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 277.

<sup>36</sup> Lotze's admiration for Humboldt was boundless. He even wrote a poem celebrating Humboldt's *Ansichten der Natur*. See Lotze an Ernst Friedrich Apelt, April 16, 1839, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 100–101.

<sup>37</sup> *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeigen*, Stück 199 (1856), 1977–1992. Reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* III, 303–314. References in parentheses are to this later edition.



there has been a conflict, which Lotze then proceeds to describe in some detail. The rapid advances of the sciences, he explains, have “disenchanted the world”, and they have undermined the old moral and religious beliefs, which now seem little more than childish mythology. We no longer see the earth as the centre of the universe but as only one speck in a vast cosmos; we no longer find friendly spirits in nature but encounter an impersonal machine; and we no longer discover beauty in the world but regard it as a passing sensation in the mind of the beholder. With the growth in knowledge all the old limitations by which man felt secure and at home in his world have disappeared: “...immeasurable, free and cold is the prospect that now surrounds us” (307). In the face of this frightening vision, Lotze warns against either retreat or despair. We cannot fall back on the old beliefs, because they have lost all their credibility now. But neither can we renounce science, whose results we have to face with honest stoicism. What then should we do? Above all we must not surrender our moral, religious and aesthetic impulses, Lotze pleads, as if they should have no place in the new scientific view of the world. Rather than lapsing into despair, we should seize the opportunity to re-direct these impulses, using them to re-think our moral, religious and aesthetic beliefs, so that we can feel at home again even in the modern scientific world. A profound optimist, Lotze is confident that there is still a middle path between a rational nihilism and an irrational leap of faith: providing a new foundation for our moral, religious and aesthetic beliefs, so that they are free from the mythology and anthropomorphism of the past, and so that they are consistent with the methods of the new sciences. Another pre-condition of such a project, Lotze insists, is re-evaluating the implications and limitations of the sciences themselves. *Mikrokosmos* would involve re-assessing the sciences as much as morality, religion and aesthetics. When we re-examine the sciences, Lotze assures us, we quickly find their limits, and as a result a new conceptual space opens up for morality, religion and aesthetics. We then make an important discovery: that the mechanical methods of the new sciences, though indispensable, ultimately play only a small role in the construction of the universe as a whole (310). Or, as Lotze put the point at the close of the book: “the validity of mechanism is limitless but its meaning everywhere only subordinate” (III, 618).

In Lotze’s account of his intentions it is impossible to mistake the influence of the materialism controversy upon him. Though the attempt to reconcile moral, religious and aesthetic values with science had been the guiding theme of Lotze’s thinking since the 1830s, that agenda was given a new relevance and urgency by the materialism controversy, which posed again, in the most dramatic form, the very dilemma Lotze wanted to resolve. The materialists—Vogt, Moleschott, Czolbe and Büchner—had all argued that there is no middle path between the horns of that dilemma, that the conflict is inevitable and irresolvable, so that it is ultimately necessary to side with science against value, reason against faith. They advocated a strictly naturalistic and mechanistic worldview, leaving no place for the ideal realm of freedom, teleology, aesthetic and moral value. While still upholding the methods and results of the sciences, Lotze wanted to preserve that ideal realm the materialists wanted to destroy.



His statement that mechanism is “only a small part of our conception of the universe” was clearly aimed against the materialists, who had made mechanism their entire perspective. Even Lotze’s attempt to write a popular work is best seen as a response to the controversy, for the materialist writings were proving to be hits, some of them going through edition after edition.<sup>38</sup> *Mikrokosmos* was designed to compete with the materialist works for the heart and souls of the ordinary educated reader. If Büchner’s *Kraft und Stoff* was meant to be everyman’s materialism, *Mikrokosmos* would be everyman’s idealism.

Despite its apparent straightforwardness, there is something deeply problematic about Lotze’s account of his intentions in writing *Mikrokosmos*. It gives rise to a misleading impression, easy to acquire but hard to shake. It seems as if Lotze regards values and science, reason and faith, as equal and independent realms, so that each will be given their due and kept within their limits. Yet Lotze never accepted Wagner’s theory of “double bookkeeping”, which would assign reason and faith separate jurisdictions.<sup>39</sup> No less than the materialists, he stood for a monistic worldview, one that upholds the *lex continui* and refuses to divide the world into distinct ontological compartments. It is necessary to recall the “teleological idealism” of Lotze’s earlier metaphysics and logic. According to that view, the ideal realm of value stands not alongside but above the natural realm; practical values are not equal but superior to theoretical ones, because they alone set the standards, limits and ends of enquiry, and because they alone prevent enquiry from sliding into the abyss of nihilism. When Lotze tells us in his “self-advertisement” that it is also necessary to re-evaluate science as much as faith we have to take him entirely at his word. For in *Mikrokosmos* he will attempt to show how some of the most basic concepts of the materialist worldview—viz., matter, force, space and time—are themselves problematic and have a definite meaning only with reference to the ideal world that the materialists were so keen to eliminate. When we take this into account, Lotze’s position shows itself to be the utter reversal of the materialists, who had one and all championed the priority of theoretical over practical reason.<sup>40</sup> Against them Lotze was deliberately re-invoking the idealist doctrine of the primacy of practical reason, which he saw as the only means to save science itself.

### 3. The Genesis of *Mikrokosmos*

The genesis of *Mikrokosmos* is a long and complicated story,<sup>41</sup> one spanning more than a decade of Lotze’s creative life. The book as we now know it—a three volume

<sup>38</sup> Moleschott’s *Kreislauf des Lebens* went through five editions by 1877; Vogt’s *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft* went through four editions in 1855 alone; and Büchner’s *Kraft und Stoff* went through no less than twenty-one editions by 1904.

<sup>39</sup> See *Medizinische Psychologie*, 36–37, #25; and *Seele und Seelenleben*, 17–18.

<sup>40</sup> See Büchner, *Kraft und Stoff* (1904), 404; Vogt, *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft*, 82–83, 121

<sup>41</sup> The story was first told by Falckenberg, *Lotze*, 140–151. The letters and documents published by Reinhardt Pester reveal an even more complicated story, only the highlights of which can be told here.

behemoth—came into being only gradually and very much evolved in the process of writing it. Lotze had the idea for writing something like *Mikrokosmos* as early as 1837 when he planned to write a collection of essays concerning man's place in nature.<sup>42</sup> Nothing, however, came of this early project, which seems to have been forgotten in the 1840s. *Mikrokosmos* would probably never have been written if it were not for the suggestion of Lotze's publisher and close friend, Salomon Hirzel, who was both his gadfly and Meccenas. Sometime in May 1850 Hirzel wrote Lotze with the proposal that he write an "Anthropologie". This proposal goes back to an earlier project, an *Enzyklopädie der medizinischen Wissenschaften*, a work which would contain, among other things, "*Anthropologie und Naturgeschichte des Menschengeschlechts*".<sup>43</sup> That project was eventually abandoned, however, because, as Lotze put it, he was "the worst of all possible editors." Lotze's initial reaction to Hirzel's new proposal was one of confusion and puzzlement. He wrote Hirzel May 26, 1850 that he did not know what was meant by "anthropology", and he confessed that he did not have plans to write one (207). Somehow, though, Hirzel's suggestion struck a deep chord, speaking to interests and ideas that Lotze had nurtured from his youth.<sup>44</sup> Though it would take years to mature, the idea for a new anthropology began to gestate, slowly but surely. In March 8, 1853, Lotze announced to Hirzel that he had now written a "*Disposition zur Anthropologie*", i.e., a prospectus and outline of the subjects that he intended to cover (229–230). The list was remarkably prescient because it covers most of the topics that Lotze would treat in the following years.

Still, the leap from plan to execution is a long one, and it would take Lotze many years before he could fulfill even part of it. It was a year later before he finally began to write in earnest. He wrote Hirzel on March 26, 1854, that he was now hard at work "on philosophical things" and that he intended "to fashion my thoughts into a system" (253). He was undecided about the organization of the work. Initially, he planned to write something "short and handy"; but in May 1855 he wrote Hirzel that he had gathered so many materials that he was now thinking of a two-volume work (264–265). He now realized that if he were to stick to his original plan, he had no choice but to write a second volume. Nothing he had written so far, which already filled one fat volume, could be called anything like an anthropology. It said nothing

<sup>42</sup> Lotze describes this project in his February 18, 1837, letter to Ernst Friedrich Apelt, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 83–84.

<sup>43</sup> See Lotze to Hirzel, September 23, 1850, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 209.

<sup>44</sup> Wentscher, *Lotze*, 216–217, warns against the misleading impression, which one can gather from Lotze's May 26 letter, that Hirzel was the sole stimulus for the project. He maintains that Hirzel's suggestion was only the occasion for Lotze's project, whose sources lay in his youth. While there is some truth in Wentscher's argument—Lotze's project does go back to his youth—Hirzel was still an important catalyst in reviving his youthful ideas. It is noteworthy that Lotze was very open to Hirzel's suggestions and plans, and gave him first choice among his literary plans. See his December 27, 1852, letter to Hirzel, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 227–228. Unfortunately, it is difficult to assess Hirzel's exact contribution to the conception of *Mikrokosmos* because of the loss of his letters.

about man's place in the creation, nothing about human history, and nothing about the differences between human and animal life. Thus the burden of writing grew.

It must be said: writing *Mikrokosmos* was no joy for its author. Work proceeded painfully, in fits and starts, exacting a physical and spiritual toll on its author. Lotze complained about the toil and trouble, the "*Sisyphusarbeit*", which cost him all his time and energy (264). It was only in September 1856 that he could inform Hirzel that he was finished with the first volume. "I am deeply happy to be done with this work, which has given me more trouble than any other."<sup>45</sup> The first volume of *Mikrokosmos* duly appeared in October 1856.

While Lotze was laboring on volume I of *Mikrokosmos* his work was interrupted by an unforeseen but disturbing event.<sup>46</sup> In May 1856 Immanuel Hermann Fichte, the son of the great philosopher, sent him a copy of his latest work, *Anthropologie*.<sup>47</sup> The mere title was troubling, given that Lotze conceived his own work as anthropology. Now, even before its publication, *Mikrokosmos* had a competitor! But this was only the beginning of Lotze's troubles. For Fichte's work seemed little more than a polemic against him, one riddled with misunderstandings and insinuations. Fichte had not only criticized his "mechanistic" philosophy, but he had also classified him as a Herbartian. Clearly, something had to be said against Fichte. He not only had to clarify his general principles, especially his stance on mechanism, but he also had to put to rest the rumors that he was a Herbartian. Yet this could not be done inside *Mikrokosmos* itself, not without burdening it with the academic polemics he so despised. So, while still in the midst of writing *Mikrokosmos*, Lotze resolved to write another work, one which could serve as a reply to Fichte and any other critics who happened to come along. This was his *Streitschriften*, which appeared in 1857,<sup>48</sup> just after the first volume of *Mikrokosmos*. Originally, Lotze envisioned a work of many installments, where each would be devoted to some contemporary issue or dispute, though, as it happened, only one installment appeared. Despite the title, *Streitschriften* is less a polemic—Lotze wisely refused to discuss the details of Fichte's work—than a valuable general statement of his philosophy as a whole. Lotze conceived it as a kind of commentary on *Mikrokosmos*, which would explain its position *vis-à-vis* his contemporaries.

Fortunately, the dispute with Fichte proved to be a sideline. Having repelled the attack on his flank, Lotze could now return to his major offensive, the trying business of writing volume II. He wrote Hirzel December 15, 1856, that he would soon be working on its first half, which he hoped to finish by Easter (294). After much hard work, he completed that half on schedule. When he wrote Hirzel again in June 1857 he was already working on the second half, which he also planned to complete by

<sup>45</sup> See Lotze to Salomon Hirzel, September 10, 1856, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 286.

<sup>46</sup> Lotze describes his reaction to Fichte's work, and his plans to deal with it, in his June 1, 1856, letter to Hirzel, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 281–282.

<sup>47</sup> Immanuel Hermann Fichte, *Anthropologie: Die Lehre von der menschlichen Seele* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1856).

<sup>48</sup> Hermann Lotze, *Streitschriften* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1857). The subtitle, reflecting the plan to write a series of works, is "Erstes Heft. In Bezug auf Prof. I.H. Fichte's Anthropologie".

next spring (306–307). Again, he moaned about the burden of writing. While Hirzel was going off to the Alps for rest and recreation, he faced a Matterhorn of a completely different kind.

After much struggle and stress, Lotze did climb that summit. Yet it gave him no relief, only the daunting prospect that there was another summit to climb. Thus he wrote Hirzel in February 1858, more than seven months later, that he had some bad news: he could not do justice to his original plan without writing a third volume (316–317)! Volume II had not yet reached the discussion of history, which he always planned to include, and whose inclusion was essential to his concept of an anthropology. Fearing Hirzel's reaction, Lotze tried to soften the blow by promising not to go beyond a third volume and to write it immediately after completing the second. And to this request for a third volume he added a little blackmail: if he were to comprise everything in two volumes, he would have to do a lot of re-writing. Surely, after all his trouble, Hirzel, friend and *Mensch*, would not ask him to do that! Since Hirzel's correspondence with Lotze is lost, we do not know how he reacted to this news; but it seems to have been met with his usual patience and kindness. For Lotze got his way, and so much so that he even contemplated further volumes.

But that, it turned out, was too much, even for Lotze's demon. Exhausted and exasperated, he wrote Hirzel, December 16, 1860, that he had enough. There would be no more sleepless nights, no more sorrow, no more headaches. Volume III of *Mikrokosmos* would be the final volume because he had no more energy, no more appetite to prolong his torment. Finally, in April 1864, Lotze told Hirzel that he could see land; there were only 120 or so pages more to go (428). Then in July 1864 he sent the final pages to Hirzel, whom Lotze thanked for his patience and stimulus over the years (428). He hoped only that Hirzel would be more satisfied with it than he was.

Such were the traumas and travails behind the genesis of the work. But what did they produce? What kind of book do we have before us? A first glance at the table of contents seems to reveal a well-organized work, one with a neat and tidy structure. It is divided into nine books, each of which consists in five chapters. Each of the three volumes consists in three books. Volume I treats the general aspects of human existence, the body, soul and life; volume II examines the place of man in nature; and volume III treats his place in history. It would be unwise, however, to place much weight on the book's external organization, which is rather artificial, the product of expository convenience rather than real differences in subject matter. What Lotze writes in one book often becomes clear and complete only when combined with another much later book. The reader constantly has to pull together what Lotze places in distant chapters and distinct volumes. The best summary of the book is therefore thematic rather than textual.

Our task now is not to summarize the main ideas of *Mikrokosmos*. That would be repetitive, since many of his earlier views re-appear essentially unchanged; but it would be also impossible, since such a massive work, the product of so many years of

reflection, resists easy summary. The book is so inexhaustible that not even a commentary its size would do justice to it. *Mikrokosmos* is like a vast cavern with several great chambers, each of which has many tiny rooms attached to it. Here we will only visit the main chambers. In this chapter we will focus only on those themes that are essential to Lotze's attempt to provide a modern worldview, to reconcile the realms of science and faith. The next chapter will focus on three further aspects of the book: its ethics, politics and philosophy of history.

#### 4. The Limits of Mechanism

Crucial to Lotze's general project of reconciling science with morality and religion was his attempt to establish the compatibility of teleology with mechanism. Whereas morality and religion involved teleology, a commitment to values and ends, science represented mechanism, the explanation of events according to general laws. These realms are reconcilable for Lotze only under two conditions: 1) they do not contradict one another in any essential respect; and 2) each is necessary. If they could be shown to be complementary or interdependent, then both conditions would be met at once. This is indeed Lotze's position. But before he could vindicate it, he first had to show the equal necessity of mechanism and teleology.

Lotze's argument for the necessity of mechanism appears chiefly in Book I of *Mikrokosmos*. Here he reaffirms the mechanical standpoint that he had advocated in his early writings on physiology. All the old polemics against the concepts of a *Lebenskraft* and of a *Weltseele* reappear with no less vigor and rigor (I, 20–21, 64–67, 72). Lotze still regards mechanism as the chief form of scientific explanation, and he continues to maintain that it is sufficient to explain all living as well as non-living phenomena. Just as he had in the 1840s, Lotze upholds the thesis that, though living and non-living phenomena are different from one another, they still follow one and the same kind of laws. Life does not distinguish itself from non-life by conforming to a distinct kind of law, still less by the possession of a unique kind of power, but only by a specific form of organization; yet its unique form of organization is just as explicable according to mechanical laws as all other events in nature (I, 58). We can account for growth and reproduction, Lotze contends, simply from the interaction of the parts of an organism, so that there is no reason to assume that there is some force or idea acting within it (I, 69, 72–74, 75, 78–79, 83). All causal agency is denied to either ideas or living forces and confined exclusively to events themselves. Lotze's chief motivation for affirming the primacy and sufficiency of mechanism is his adherence to the general principle of the unity of nature, according to which there cannot be any fundamental nomological difference between non-living and living phenomena (I, 84). The first volume of *Mikrokosmos* indeed closes with an adamant affirmation of mechanism, with what Lotze calls its "first commandment": just as we are to have no gods before us but one, so we are to have no other form of explanation of finite being before us but mechanism (I, 451).

It is important to see, however, that Lotze sharply distinguishes mechanism from materialism. To explain something mechanically for him does not mean that it has to be a material thing, at least not in the old classical sense, i.e., something whose essence consists in inertia or extension. Lotze regards mechanism chiefly as a thesis about a form of explanation, not as a thesis about the nature of things. The mechanist's central thesis is that we can explain all phenomena through the laws of their interaction; he sticks to the data of experience, and he is completely neutral about the inner identity of things, about what they might be in themselves (II, 36, 37–38). It is therefore perfectly consistent with mechanism, Lotze argues, for the mechanist to hold that the ultimate elements of things consist in immaterial forces or points (I, 37–41; II, 33). His mechanist indeed rejects the old static conception of matter, adopting instead a dynamic one, according to which matter consists entirely in forces of attraction and repulsion and not some substrate in which they inhere (II, 34). Most analyses of matter do not go far enough, he contends, because they assume that extension is simple and given, whereas it is in reality composite and derived, the result of the interaction of forces (I, 40–41).

Having passionately re-affirmed mechanism, Lotze faced the problem of determining its limits. Is mechanism the *sole* form of explanation, so that there is no need for teleology? Or is it only one form of explanation, which must be complemented by teleology? In Book I of *Mikrokosmos* Lotze indicates what he regards as one of the chief limits of mechanism: that though it can explain organic growth and reproduction, it cannot account for the origin of life itself (I, 74). We can explain the maintenance and reproduction of organic structure through the interaction of its elements, he argues, but we cannot understand why that structure came into being in the first place (I, 83). There was nothing new to this argument, which Lotze had already put forward in his *Allgemeine Pathologie*. Yet there does seem something artificial about it. If we can explain growth and reproduction through the interaction of chemical elements, why cannot we appeal to the same forces to explain the origin of life itself? Lotze does not provide a straightforward answer to this crucial question.

Realizing that he had not fully explored or explained the limits of mechanism in Volume I of *Mikrokosmos*, Lotze returned to the topic with renewed energy in volume II, especially in chapter 2 of Book IV.<sup>49</sup> Here he engages in a deep discussion of the pros and cons of mechanism. Now we see the negative side of his attitude toward mechanism, which makes him liken the mechanist to Goethe's Mephistopheles: "*der Geist der stets verneint*" (II, 17). Still, knowing that the case for teleology could only be as strong as the case made for its antithesis, Lotze plays devil's advocate, providing a sympathetic and sophisticated defense and formulation of mechanism, one that goes beyond anything he wrote before. He even goes to great lengths to remove what he calls "the blemish of implausibility" surrounding mechanism. Only at the end does

<sup>49</sup> *Mikrokosmos* II, 17–44.

Lotze reveal his hand, invoking the ultimate talisman to put mechanism firmly in its place.

The discussion begins with Lotze admitting some of the major weaknesses of traditional teleology, especially the argument for design. Though the champion of design seems to have experience in his favor, his advantage turns out upon examination to be only apparent. We are struck by the intricate structure of living beings, their harmony and order, where each part is perfectly adapted to all the others, and where each is both means and ends. We think that such a structure has to be the product of design just as much as any human artifact. Nevertheless, Lotze insists, we cannot infer from the intricacy of organic structure that *all* of nature is created according to some design or plan. This would be a bold inference from only a few conspicuous cases. Furthermore, if we examine organic structure more closely, we have to admit that we do not really know that it is so perfect after all. We cannot understand the purpose of many parts of an organism, and we have no *a priori* reason to assume that they all serve some end. Indeed, the animal kingdom gives much evidence for the superfluity of its creations, both parts of creatures and the creatures themselves in the general economy (II, 18–19). Lotze concedes that what seems to be perfect upon first sight in nature—what appeals to our aesthetic sense—might be the product of a long gradual process of development (II, 29). What we see, he admits, might be the result of nature's successes, though it has made many experiments, most of which have been failures (II, 28–29).

Lotze fully recognizes, however, that the modern case for teleology does not rest upon the tired arguments for design, or the old doctrine of providence, according to which everything in nature is a means for some divinely appointed end. We must look for the purpose of an organism not in the general economy of nature, he advises, but within its own structure and being. Following Goethe, Lotze declares: "In its own existence lies the purpose of each created thing..." (II, 20). The highest goal of an organism is nothing more than realizing "the idea of its own existence." But shifting the argument away from providence and external design to inner purposes creates problems all its own, Lotze concedes. For how do we define the inner purpose or end of the organism? If it is simply whatever leads to its success, to its functioning well as it lives now, then anything will seem like evidence for design, for the adaption of means to ends (II, 21–22). Even if the universe were completely different from now, having utterly different creatures, we could still say that everything was perfectly designed for their functioning well (II, 22). In this case the purpose is nothing more than the effect of its causes.

Throughout the ages the standard argument in behalf of intelligent design was that it is utterly incredible that the order and harmony of an organism, the perfect adaption of means to ends, could be the result of chance alone. If we postulate an original chaos of elements, as the Epicureans did, it is highly unlikely that these elements ever come together in the organized structures necessary for life. Just as a million monkeys jumping over typewriters will never produce a work of Shakespeare, so a million fortuitously interacting molecules will never produce an organism. There are passages where

Lotze seems to endorse this argument (II, 24, 31). But he does not push it because he realizes that the mechanist has a plausible line of response to it. The mechanist would contest its underlying premise: that living beings have to be formed by chance, as if the starting point for their creation had to be some original chaos (II, 32–33). Either design or chance is for him a false dilemma. It is indeed the mechanist's central contention that the order and harmony of an organism is the result of mechanical laws alone. Lotze's mechanist points out that, because of the laws of chemistry, only certain combinations of elements are possible, and only those combinations have endured that somehow have been physically stable and ensured the survival of the organism (27). Lotze imagines that nature has attempted many combinations of elements, and that only some of them have proven successful (28–29). It is striking, however, that in his reconstruction of the mechanist's argument he does not envisage anything like the mechanism of evolution, i.e., the process whereby organisms survive because they adapt to the environment or win out against competitors in the struggle to survive.<sup>50</sup> What seems to make for success or failure, as Lotze envisages it, is nothing more than chemical affinity, i.e., whether the chemical elements can combine in a stable and enduring way. Unstable combinations die out quickly, stable combinations endure, simply by themselves, irrespective of their relation to the environment (II, 29–31).

Although Lotze has little conception of the mechanism of evolution, he formulates a kind of mechanism which he thinks is sufficient to generate the organization characteristic of living beings (II, 31–41). It is perfectly consistent with mechanism, he argues, to attribute a tendency toward self-preservation to masses a matter (II, 35). This is because each mass has inertia, i.e., a tendency to maintain itself in its present state against countervailing forces from the outside. Masses a matter come together to form of system of equilibrium, where each mass keeps its present state as long as possible in a manner consistent with the similar states of others. This tendency of each mass to preserve itself in its present state, and to find a stable equilibrium with forces acting upon it from outside, is sufficient to generate, Lotze imagines, complex forms of organization (II, 38–41). We need to assume only a tendency of a mass to maintain itself, and then normal laws of attraction and repulsion operating between masses, for matter to organize itself. If we make these assumptions, we do not have to assume some higher hand of providence directing all the masses, because they organize themselves by virtue of their inherent forces of inertia, attraction and repulsion.

Lotze's sympathetic reconstruction of mechanism leaves us with the troubling question: What is wrong with mechanism after all? It seems that it can explain not only the maintenance and reproduction but also the creation of complex organisms, so that there is really no need for teleology. The whole issue proves to be more complicated,

<sup>50</sup> In Book III, chapter 5, Lotze comes closer to describing the mechanism of evolution. Here he says that after innumerable failed creations nature will eventually hit upon successful forms of organization, which have a chemical composition enabling them to resist forces in the environment. See I, 425. However, he regards this theory as improbable (*wenig wahrscheinlich*).



however. For Lotze provides another perspective on the whole question in chapter 1 of Book IV. From the argument so far, it would seem that teleology and mechanism are competing forms of explanation, opposing ways of accounting for the same phenomena. But Lotze now suggests that they are not really trying to do the same thing at all. While mechanism attempts *to explain* things—how they come into being—teleology attempts *to interpret* their value (*Werth*) or meaning (*Sinn*). Or, as Lotze puts it, mechanism is explanatory (*erklärende*) whereas teleology is “interpretative” (*ausdeutende*) (II, 6).<sup>51</sup> According to this distinction, mechanism and teleology are now assigned to very different domains. While mechanism deals with the causes of things in the realm of existence, teleology treats their meaning or value according to their “ideas”. Mechanism oversteps its bounds if it draws conclusions about the worth of things from their causes; and teleology goes beyond its limits if it makes inferences about the genesis of a thing from its value or worth (II, 7). Lotze further suggests that mechanism and teleology are indeed complementary, because mechanism is necessary to explain how ideas come into being, whereas teleology is necessary to give value and meaning to the mechanism (II, 8).

Lotze further expounds this line of thought at the end of chapter 2 of Book IV. There we learn that mechanism, though it can explain everything in the natural world, is still missing something of the greatest importance: namely, the idea of a moral vocation (II, 43). A moral vocation means having a place and purpose in the cosmos, a meaning and justification for our existence. This idea was central to the old teleological conception of the world, which saw the vocation of man as the fulfillment of his role in providence. It is the great disadvantage of the mechanist’s world, Lotze believes, that it provides man with no sense of vocation. There is no need to justify our existence in the mechanist order. The mechanist world order claims that it has its own right to be, independent of human purposes, indifferent to either good or evil. But however much mechanism can explain things, it cannot undermine or deprive us of our need for a vocation. This need arises from a deep moral feeling within us, which the mechanist cannot explain but which he still has to acknowledge.

Though it seems very promising, Lotze admits that this line of thought has its own problems. First, he does not want the interpretative perspective of teleology to be only a regulative one, as if its interpretations of nature were only what we read into it and had no validity for nature itself. The ideas should have some kind of objective power, a constitutive status, so that they are in some way behind the formation of things (II, 8–9). In assuming this Lotze had overcome his old vacillation about the regulative versus constitutive status of teleology, standing firmly and finally for its constitutive status. Second, there is still the problem of explaining the connection between the realm of values and nature (II, 15). Namely, the purposes are so general that they could be realized in all kinds of different ways; they are still compatible with different forms

<sup>51</sup> This distinction anticipates Dilthey’s later distinction between explanatory and interpretative psychology. On Lotze’s importance for Dilthey in this respect, see Ermath, *Dilthey*, 95, 113, 183.

of nature, with different systems of natural laws. The multiplicity of particular natural laws remains only contingent for the purposes and meanings that we think that we can find in nature in general. So nature, in all its particular variety and diffusion, still remains very much a mystery

In the end, then, Lotze's argument in Book IV leaves us with a moral rather than metaphysical justification for teleology. What justifies teleology alongside mechanism is not its explanatory but its normative value. The conflict between teleology and mechanism is resolved because they hold sway over distinct realms: teleology over the normative, mechanism over the natural realm. Lotze had ended Book III of *Mikrokosmos* with a dualism between the normative and natural realms (I, 447). From nature we cannot determine value; and from value we cannot determine anything about nature. He had come no closer to closing the gap between them at the end of Book IV. The problem still remained: how could the normative and natural be complementary and interdependent? Only when Lotze had an answer to that question could he claim to have reconciled science and morality. We will examine in later sections Lotze's struggle with this question.

## 5. Encounter with Darwin

It is important to see that Lotze's account of the limits of mechanism in Book IV of *Mikrokosmos* was pre-Darwinian. When Lotze wrote it in the late 1850s Darwin's *Origin of Species* had still not arrived. It was not published until 1859, though it appeared only a year later in German translation.<sup>52</sup> This raises the question of Lotze's attitude toward Darwin. Sooner or later, it seemed, he would have to discuss him because, in so many ways, *Mikrokosmos* touched on the question of the origin of humanity. That, at any rate, was the view of Rudolph Wagner, who wrote Lotze in March 1862 suggesting that he discuss "the Darwinian hypothesis" in the forthcoming volume III of *Mikrokosmos*.<sup>53</sup>

Wagner's suggestion did not fall on deaf ears. In the first chapter of volume III of *Mikrokosmos* Lotze raises anew the question whether the origin of life is entirely explicable in natural terms. Though Lotze does not mention Darwin, or any of his followers, by name, the context makes it highly plausible that he had them in mind. "Nature or creation?" That was how Lotze now posed the question. The Darwinians held that nature alone is sufficient to explain everything, and that the traditional theistic creation story is only a myth. For Lotze, however, this is really a false dilemma. Even if we explain all the forms of life entirely through mechanical or natural means, that does not mean that the creation story is false. That story is highly mythological,

<sup>52</sup> Charles Darwin, *Über die Entstehung der Arten im Thier- und Pflanzenreich durch natürlichen Züchtung; oder, Erhaltung der vervollkommeneten Rassen in Kampfe um's Daseyn*, translated by Heinrich Georg Bronn (Stuttgart: Schweizerbart, 1860).

<sup>53</sup> Rudolph Wagner to Lotze, March 23, 1862, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 388.

of course, but once purged of its coarser anthropomorphisms it can be made entirely consistent with the most rigorous naturalism. Lotze puts the point this way: even if we imagine the entire creation penetrated by divine activity, nothing in its natural development will be any different (III, 6). There is no need for the theist to suppose some kind of supernatural activity intervening in the laws of nature; rather, the very operation of these laws is the means by which the divine realizes the ends of its activity.

After Lotze had completed most of the third volume of *Mikrokosmos*, the need to take account of Darwin became even more urgent. For in September 1863 Ernst Haeckel gave his famous speech in defense of Darwin before a large plenary session of the *Gesellschaft deutscher Naturforscher und Aertze*.<sup>54</sup> Having received a warm reception from an eminent audience, Haeckel's speech put Darwin's theory at the centre of attention of German physiologists.

Amid all the fuss, Lotze stayed his usual cool and distant self. It is not that he opposed Darwin's work; indeed, he admired its rigorous empiricism, its careful sifting of facts and laborious accumulation of evidence; he even praised Darwin for his efforts to explain the transformation of species.<sup>55</sup> Still, Lotze did not regard the theory as new, and even less could he accept the philosophical implications drawn from it by its chief advocates. These reservations were not enough, however, to make him want to discuss Darwinism and to enter into the growing controversy about it. The old pathology that kept him out of the materialism controversy—the fear of publicity, the desire for privacy—still held sway. Hence Lotze wrote Hirzel in February 1872 that in future editions of *Mikrokosmos* he could not bring himself to write about all the latest issues, meaning by that first and foremost Darwinism.<sup>56</sup> He excused himself on the grounds that writing about Darwin would make him depart too much from the general plan of the work and that it would not add anything substantially new to what he already had said.

Such was the fuss about Darwinism, though, that Lotze eventually capitulated, if only in a begrudging and terse way. At the close of Book IV of the third edition of *Mikrokosmos*, which appeared in 1878, Lotze engaged in a brief discussion of Darwinism.<sup>57</sup> Departing from his vow not to engage in academic controversy, Lotze mentions Darwin by name, one of the few cases in the entire book where he refers to current writers. His response is defensive, to the say the least. He explains that the goals and limits of his own work do not permit him to examine all the facts uncovered by recent research. But he also sees no special need to discuss theories about these facts, for he has he had already done that in earlier editions. He had already countered the theory that life arose entirely by chance, and he had already presented the view

<sup>54</sup> On the content and reception of Haeckel's speech, see Robert Richards, *Tragic Sense of Life: Ernst Haeckel and the Struggle over Evolutionary Thought*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 94–104.

<sup>55</sup> Lotze, *Logik* (1874), §183, 232.

<sup>56</sup> Lotze to Hirzel, February 26, 1872, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 561.

<sup>57</sup> See *Mikrokosmos*, II, 137–138 of the fourth edition (1885).

that life arose from natural selection and the struggle for existence. Lotze had nothing to say about the precise mechanics of evolution since such matters should be decided by experience alone. He insisted, however, that the Darwinian theory does not affect the ultimate question why living forms arose in the first place, nor did it invalidate the theistic belief that life arose immediately from the divine will. As he had already written at the close of Book III of *Mikrokosmos*: even if natural science were perfectly able to explain the evolution of living forms from the chaos of original elements, this would not undermine the theist's view that creation serves divine ends.

There was something deeply ironic, though, about Lotze's response toward Darwinism in the third edition. He insisted that there was no need for him to discuss Darwin—but there he was discussing him all the same! There was also something disingenuous about it too, or at least Lotze had a false memory of what he had already said. For nowhere in the earlier editions had he anticipated, let alone discussed, something like Darwin's theory.<sup>58</sup> There are only the barest hints of a discussion of a theory of natural selection and the struggle for survival in *Mikrokosmos*. Lotze's own discussion about the origins of life had stressed the formation of stable chemical compounds and their adaption to the environment; but he says little about the struggle for existence and the formation of species over time. Lotze was indeed too quick to associate Darwin's theory with the old Epicurean view that life arose by chance.

Lotze never overcame his reluctance to discuss Darwin, and he never gave his work the more detailed examination it deserved. His final treatment of Darwin is lamentably brief, confined to a few paragraphs of his 1879 *Metaphysik*.<sup>59</sup> Lotze now attempts to bring order and clarity into the controversy surrounding Darwin by making a distinction between two kinds of question. The first kind of question is metaphysical: it asks about the general principles behind all natural development; the second kind of question is empirical: it asks about what has taken place in particular in history. These questions are distinct from one another in two ways, Lotze implies. First, from our general principles we cannot infer what has taken place in particular in history; and, second, from our empirical data, which refers to only what has happened in history at a particular time and place, we cannot draw general conclusions about the principles of all natural development. These questions have been greatly confused, Lotze claims, because the Darwinians draw broad inferences from empirical observations, as if their very limited data has settled general metaphysical issues. Yet all the empirical evidence accumulated about evolution is still compatible with different metaphysical principles

<sup>58</sup> In Book III, chapter 5, Lotze comes closer to describing the mechanism of evolution. Here he says that after innumerable failed creations nature will eventually hit upon successful forms of organization, which have a chemical composition enabling them to resist forces in the environment. See I, 425. However, he regards this theory as improbable (*wenig wahrscheinlich*). In Book IV, chapter 5, Lotze notes that there is something like natural selection at work because older generations die off, and younger generations survive, depending on their ability to adapt to the environment. See II, 110–111. But he does not explore the implications of this suggestion.

<sup>59</sup> *Metaphysik*, §§236–237, 464–466.

about the origins of things. The metaphysician therefore should be neutral about the facts of evolution, which are compatible with either the divine or natural origin of things. From an ethical point of view we should also not worry whether man has descended from apes; for what matters is who we are now, not what we were then. The distinction Lotze draws here is parallel to his earlier distinction in *Mikrokosmos* between explaining the maintenance and creation of life. While we can explain the maintenance of life according to mechanical causes, he then argued, we cannot do the same for its creation, whose origins transcend the limits of experience and scientific investigation. Lotze continued to uphold this distinction, insisting that all attempts to explain the origin of life, not least the Darwinian one, were too speculative, going beyond the limits of experience. Regarding metaphysical hypotheses about the origin of life, Lotze again insisted that he had nothing more to add beyond what he had said in chapter II of Book IV of *Mikrokosmos*. But Lotze then immediately proceeds to violate his own strictures by finding fault with what he calls “Darwinian” hypotheses. He argues that it is implausible that the necessary conditions for life arose in one place and time alone, and that, given differences in environment, it came from one kind of organic germ.<sup>60</sup> It is more plausible to assume, he argues, that life arose at many times and places, that it came from different kinds of original germs, and that it assumed widely different forms. But though Lotze thinks these more plausible inferences, he does not insist on their validity because he regards them as empirical matters which have to be tested by more research.

And with that, Lotze’s encounter with Darwin came to its disappointing close. His failure to treat Darwin in any detail, to sift through the many complicated issues, was one of the greatest shortcomings of his mature philosophy. It left an open flank in his great attempt to reconcile the realms of value and science. It was in the end perhaps a case of tragic timing: Darwin come on the scene too late for Lotze, who, having battled materialism in the 1840s and 1850s, had become weary and wary, believing, wrongly, that he had seen it all before.

## 6. Spiritualism versus Idealism

Lotze’s solution to the conflict between science and value, we have seen so far, is to assign teleology and mechanism to distinct logical spheres. Mechanism concerns the *natural* realm, the explanation for how things come into being; teleology deals with the *normative* realm, the interpretation of the meaning of things. According to this solution, science and value stand in equal and independent spheres, where no conflict should arise between them as long as each respects its proper boundaries. But this line of argument, which appears chiefly in Books I and IV of *Mikrokosmos*, is only one of Lotze’s approaches to this problem. He has another more radical strategy of dealing

<sup>60</sup> We will leave aside the question whether these really were Darwinian hypotheses.

with it, which appears in Books III, V and IX. This strategy gives *primacy* to the sphere of value over science, *priority* to teleology over mechanism. It is most evident in the preface and conclusion of *Mikrokosmos* where Lotze writes that the proper solution to the conflict between science and value is to give mechanism a necessary but *subordinate* place in the intellectual universe (I, xv; III, 618).

Lotze first suggests his more radical strategy in chapter 4 of Book III, “Das Leben der Materie”.<sup>61</sup> His argument begins by contrasting the world as science describes it and as we experience it (I, 386–392). According to physics, the world consists in a multitude of material objects whose essential properties are various modalities of extension, viz., size, shape and weight. Since these properties are precisely measurable, they are strictly quantitative, and they follow laws which determine the co-variance between these quantities. However, the world as we experience it, the world we perceive with our senses, is a qualitative and aesthetic realm which consists in various sensations, viz., colors, sounds, tastes, textures and smells. Since these sensations do not resemble their material causes, viz., sound and light waves, they do not represent or mirror the world of material objects. They show us only how material objects appear to us, the effect they have upon our human physiology; but they tell us nothing about reality in itself. From the scientific standpoint, then, human experience seems to have a merely epiphenomenal significance; it is a product of material things that give us no knowledge about them.

Boldly and bluntly, Lotze proposes that we reverse this picture. Rather than making material things into the paradigm of truth to which our senses should conform, we should make our sense experience the paradigm to which material things should conform (I, 396). We should regard the world of human experience as the *meaning* and *purpose* of nature, for which material things are only the apparatus, means or instrument. Just as the purpose of the play is to excite feelings and thoughts in the spectator, so the purpose of nature is to do the same; no one would identify the meaning and purpose of the play with the stage props and machinery; and, similarly, no one should see the meaning and purpose of nature in its mechanism. So on this proposal, the meaning and purpose of things consists in its appearance in human experience, in the aesthetic and qualitative dimension of human consciousness (I, 397).

So far Lotze has given only a proposal, not an argument. And why should we accept it? Why regard human experience as the meaning and purpose of things? Why assume that material things have meaning or purposes at all? Are these not simply what we read into them? The answers to these questions lay with Lotze’s metaphysics, which he first expounded in his *Metaphysik*, and which reappears in summary form in *Mikrokosmos*. That ontology had two parts, one positive and the other negative. According to the positive part, the essence of things consist in their ideas. Since ideas are the proper bearers of meaning, the essence of things will have meanings, so that

<sup>61</sup> *Mikrokosmos* I, 386–416.

they are not only read into the world by human beings. According to the negative part, the essence of things does not consist in extension, because space is only a subjective form of intuition. Hence the materialist's ultimate reality—matter—evaporates.

The positive part of Lotze's ontology reappears in chapter 1 of Book V of *Mikrokosmos*. Here, in one brief section, Lotze sketches his entire ontology (II, 157–169).<sup>62</sup> Its task is to determine the essence of a thing or in what its ultimate reality consists. We are first told that this essence cannot consist in some substance, the thing prior to its properties and in which they inhere, because this substance is only an abstraction, the hypostasis of a grammatical subject (II, 158–159). To be at all, a thing must be determinate, and so it consists in its properties, in its determinate manners of being (II, 159). But, on the other hand, the essence of a thing cannot consist in just a conjunction of properties, because this would not account for the unity of the thing, still less its persistence through change (II, 166). To avoid these problems, some philosophers want to explain the essence of a thing in terms of its activity; but this too is problematic, and for two reasons: because things are not only active but also passive; and because it is strange to talk about an activity without something that acts (II, 160–163). So what is the thing if it is not a substance, a conjunction of properties, or an activity? The only reasonable option, Lotze concludes, is that the essence of the thing consists in its idea, where by "idea" he means not simply the manner or form by which we think about things but the content we think about them (II, 167). The idea is not simply a conjunction of properties, nor even a connection between them, but what makes them all parts of a single meaningful whole. As the content of thought the idea makes reality comprehensible or rational; but it also does not reduce it down to what exists in the minds of individual subjects, for that content is the same for all subjects who think about it, and it stays the same even though it appears differently under different circumstances.

The negative part of Lotze's ontology appears in chapter 4 of Book III (I, 397–405). We now see the reality of matter dissolve. Lotze maintains that there are two sides to matter: its outer and inner side. Its *outer* side consists in its spatial properties, its extension in space as it appears to our senses; but its *inner* side consists in forces, which are not themselves spatial. Lotze's argument here goes back to Leibniz, to whom he alludes at one point (I, 406). Following Leibniz, Lotze maintains that space is essentially divisible, and that a specific space arises from the aggregation of more simple units; when a series of such units is added together and laid along side one another, the result is a specific space or place. Space is not a primitive or basic property of matter, for the simple reason that it is necessary to ask why a body fills a space or occupies a place; and the reason lies in the body possessing a force of resistance, a power to repel any other body from taking its place (I, 402–403).<sup>63</sup> Space as a whole then arises from

<sup>62</sup> See also chapter 3 of Book IX, III, 516–519.

<sup>63</sup> Lotze's argument here is indebted to Kant's *Monadologia physica*, *Schriften* (Akademie Ausgabe) I, 473–487. Lotze wrote in 1855 that he regarded Kant's early work as "*der wahre Abschluss der Atomistik*". See his review of Fechner's *Ueber die physikalische und Philosophische Atomlehre*, *Kleine Schriften* III, 225–227.

a system of bodies resisting and attracting one another; it is the product of the interaction of their inner forces of attraction and repulsion (I, 403). The net effect of Lotze's argument is that space is epiphenomenal, the product of particular things interacting with one another. But if space is epiphenomenal, so is the entire world of material objects whose essential properties are spatial.

Lotze attempts to combine this Leibnizian theory of space with a Kantian one, according to which space is the a priori form of human intuition. We have already seen how Lotze, in his Zittau days, had reaffirmed the Kantian theory, which reappears in chapter 2, Book IX, of *Mikrokosmos* (III, 489–498). Though Lotze now thinks that Kant's arguments for the subjectivity of space are very weak, he still thinks that his fundamental thesis is correct: space is indeed a subjective form of intuition (III, 491, 492, 502). Lotze qualifies the Kantian theory, however, by holding that the mind supplies only the general intuition of space, whereas the particular relations of things within it are due to how things in themselves act upon us (III, 500, 231–232). This is again the realistic element of his metaphysics, which we have noted in his treatment of sensation.<sup>64</sup>

It was this metaphysics, in both its positive and negative aspects, that gave Lotze his rationale for his radical proposal. The positive aspect, which states that the essence of things consists in ideas, means that mechanism will play only a subordinate role in the intellectual universe. For mechanism comprises only the means or artifice for the realization of ideas; even though it holds without exception for any event in the natural world, its operations take place for the sake of some purpose or meaning, which is expressed by an idea. The negative aspect, which makes matter derivative rather than fundamental, means that matter too, like mechanism, will play a subordinate role in the universe. As the product of the interaction of intensive forces, matter will have a merely epiphenomenal status, the appearance of more basic forces.

Whatever its merits, Lotze's more radical strategy in *Mikrokosmos* marks an important shift away from his former "teleological idealism" in the *Metaphysik*.<sup>65</sup> In some respects it simply re-introduces themes of that earlier doctrine. Just like teleological idealism, it gives priority to the normative over the natural, defends the subjective reality of space, and analyzes the essence of things into ideas. So close is the affinity that it is tempting to continue to describe the metaphysics of *Mikrokosmos* as "idealism"; the term seems especially fitting, given that idealism is the antithesis of materialism, which Lotze opposes as much now as then. It is striking, however, that throughout *Mikrokosmos* Lotze no longer uses the term "teleological idealism" to describe his own philosophy. Indeed, in two places he even distances himself decisively from what he calls "idealism" and criticizes it severely. That raises some interesting and inescapable questions: Was Lotze abandoning his earlier doctrine? Or was he simply reformulating

<sup>64</sup> See Part II, chapter 4, section 4 above.

<sup>65</sup> In some respects the shift away from idealism is already apparent in the *Medizinische Psychologie*, 132; #118.



it? To answer these questions, we should look closely at those passages where he criticizes idealism.

One place where Lotze criticizes idealism is in chapter 1 of Book VIII, "Die Wahrheit und das Wissen".<sup>66</sup> This is an especially revealing chapter, for here for the first time in *Mikrokosmos* Lotze states his general epistemological position. His exposition of that position is set in an historical context in which he traces the development of knowledge from its origins in myth to its culmination in modern science. One of the most important stages in this development, we learn, is the Greek conception of *logos*, the idea that the world is governed by reason or thought. Though this idea was crucial for the eventual growth of science, it suffered, in Lotze's estimation, from a severe problem: it led to an overconfidence in the powers of reason, as if the essence of things could be grasped by logic or reasoning alone independent of experience (207–208). The decisive step toward modern science came in breaking down this presumption, in recognizing that thinking cannot create its own object but that it must receive it from experience; rather than attempting to provide a substantive criterion of truth, reason resigned itself to be a mere tool for the interrogation of experience. Though science achieved its success only by heeding this basic lesson, the shadow of the *logos* doctrine still haunts the modern age (244). Its persistent presence is evident, Lotze believes, in the idealist doctrine of Schelling and Hegel, and more specifically in their principle of subject-object identity, according to which the very existence and essence of things consists in reason alone. Lotze understands "idealism" here in terms of this doctrine, which he firmly and expressly repudiates. The failure of idealism is apparent, he argues, in its attempt to construct a complete system of nature through pure thinking alone. For it is impossible to construct through a priori reasoning the basic content of experience; that content, even in its more general features, has to be given to sense perception (237–238). Furthermore, the principle of subject-object identity not only cannot derive, but it is even falsified by, the *dualism* between subject and object that appears in our ordinary experience, i.e., the basic fact that objects are given to us and appear independent of our will and imagination (236).

It is important to see that the problem of idealism for Lotze is not only one of practice but one of principle. It is not simply that we finite beings, because of our limited powers of reasoning, cannot demonstrate the essential truth of the *logos* or principle of subject-object identity; the difficulty lies in the principle itself, which claims that the very essence or being of things lies in reason or thought alone. The difficulty, in other words, is not only epistemological but ontological: it is not that we cannot *know* the rational essence of things, but that the essence of things themselves is not entirely rational. Lotze makes this stronger point when he declares: "...the essence of things does not consist in thoughts, and thinking is not in a position to grasp it..." (243). This hardly seems to jibe with Lotze's own doctrine that the essence of things

<sup>66</sup> *Mikrokosmos* III, 185–243.

consists in ideas; but he insists that doctrine does not mean that *all* reality is rational (II, 168–169). There is still the reality of sensing, feeling and willing, which is not reducible to reason alone.

Having repudiated Schelling's and Hegel's idealism, Lotze goes on to explain what he regards as the truth behind its doctrine. The very sentence in which he protests against equating thought and being continues: "...the *whole* spirit nevertheless perhaps experiences in other forms of its activity and emotions the essential *meaning* of all being and acting..." (243–244).<sup>67</sup> The sense of this obscure passage becomes clearer when we place its crucial terms, "meaning" (*Sinn*) and "spirit" (*Geist*), in context. Lotze chooses the term "meaning" because he thinks that idealism should be formulated less as a doctrine about the *existence* of things and more as one about the *value, meaning or sense* of things (239). One of the main shortcomings of the ancient Greeks, Lotze tells us, is that they failed to distinguish between the realm of value and existence, between truths, which are valid, and things, which exist (209). They hypostasized validity as if it consisted in a special realm of being, when in fact it consists in a realm of truth or value that applies to all kinds of being.<sup>68</sup> Lotze prefers the term "spirit" partly because it has a wider meaning than thought. "Spirit" refers to not only thinking, but all forms of human experience, including feeling, intuition and volition. Now if we regard idealism as a thesis about meaning, Lotze suggests, we should make the meaning of things depend upon spirit rather than thought, for there are many forms of value or meaning that arise from, and are only accessible to, emotion and volition as well. Indeed, as we shall soon see, Lotze thinks that value becomes apparent to us chiefly through feeling rather than the intellect.

Lotze had another more compelling reason, however, for preferring the concept of spirit to that of thought, a reason which is fully evident in chapters 3 and 4 of Book IX of *Mikrokosmos*, though Lotze had already become fully clear about it in the *Medizinische Psychologie*.<sup>69</sup> Once we recognize that idealism is essentially a theory about the meaning and value of things, once we cease to hypostasize meanings and values, we begin to see, Lotze argues, that idealism by itself is seriously incomplete. The problem is that it cannot explain what brings meaning and value into existence, what agent realizes them in the world. The idealist has to admit that ideas cannot act by themselves, that they do not have hands or feet to do something in the world; they do not even have causal powers to bring themselves into existence. They are only valid and they do not exist by themselves. Now the instrument or agent that brings ideas into existence, Lotze insists, is spirit. Spirits are existing active things, agents that have the power to act for the sake of ideas and to realize them in the world. It is spirit, then,

<sup>67</sup> The crucial passage is as untranslatable as it is obscure: "...aber der *ganze* Geist erlebt dennoch vielleicht in andern Formen seiner Thätigkeit und seines Ergriffenseins den wesentlichen Sinn alles Seins und Wirkens ...".

<sup>68</sup> Here, of course, Lotze anticipates the famous doctrine of the chapter 2 of Book III of his mature *Logik*.

<sup>69</sup> *Mikrokosmos* III, 519–520, 574–575. Cf. *Medizinische Psychologie*, 75, #60; 92, #78; 127, #111. See Part II, chapter 4, section 4 above.

that bridges the gulf between the realms of validity and reality, making ideas ruling forces in the world.

The other place in *Mikrokosmos* where Lotze distances himself from “idealism” is in chapter 3 of Book IX, “Das Reale und der Geist”,<sup>70</sup> where again he discusses the problem of knowledge. Here Lotze continues to describe “idealism” in Schellingian or Hegelian terms, but now he focuses on not the rationalist principle of subject-object identity but the pantheist thesis that there is a single infinite being of which all finite beings are only modes (529). This thesis is “idealistic” in the sense that the single infinite being creates itself as, and realizes itself through, finite minds (530). Lotze explains that he has already adopted a position like this, though he has left it indeterminate what it means for finite things to be modes of the infinite (529). This indeterminacy was deliberate, of course, because it is with regard to just this issue that he intends to depart from idealism. His chief objection to idealism now is that it does not give sufficient reality to finite beings, which are made into mere products or appearances of the infinite (531). Whatever they think or do is really only the infinite mind thinking and acting through them. That was once Jacobi’s chief objection against Spinozism—its failure to grant reality to human individuality and agency—and Lotze now appears to turn it against Schelling and Hegel themselves.<sup>71</sup> He attempts to give greater reality to the finite modes by claiming that their spirituality or ideality comes from them rather than the single infinite mind. In other words, each finite thing is ideal by virtue of its own nature rather than by its participation in the single infinite mind (531). What allows Lotze to ascribe spirituality or ideality to each finite thing? Here he falls back on his general metaphysics, more specifically, his Leibnizian analysis of substances into individual “ideas”, “thoughts” or “concepts”. Since each thing has its own distinctive concept, it has an irreducible or unique identity, which ensures its individuality within the single infinite substance. Since, furthermore, each thing acts according to its own nature, striving to realize its concept by virtue of its own activity alone, it is subjective or spiritual, since self-movement or spontaneity is the distinctive feature of living as opposed to non-living things.

It is clear from chapter 3 of Book IX that Lotze wants to correct Spinoza’s monism with Leibniz’s concept of individuality, which, he thinks, will alone give reality and independence to the finite modes of his single infinite substance. The crucial question, of course, is whether he can really combine these doctrines. Leibniz’s concept seems to shred Spinoza’s single infinite substance into an infinitude of finite pieces. For how can we say that there is one infinite substance if each finite thing has its own independent identity? Lotze struggles mightily with this problem, insisting repeatedly that the

<sup>70</sup> *Mikrokosmos*, III, 514–548, esp. 525–536.

<sup>71</sup> F.H. Jacobi, *Briefe über die Lehre von Spinoza*, in *Werke* (Leipzig: Fleischer, 1819), IV/2, 95. See also IV/1, 56, and IV/2, 145–146, 153–155, 159. Of course, Hegel too had been troubled by Jacobi’s objection, and his own idealism was an attempt to answer it. Lotze seems to assume here, however, that Hegel had not been successful in answering it. Since he does not ascribe what he calls “idealism” here to any individual thinker, it is not certain that he is correcting Hegel or trying to explain the deeper meaning of his position.

individual identity of finite things does not place them outside the infinite (532, 534, 536). But how can they still be inside it if each has an independent identity? Lotze does not fully resolve this issue in chapter 3 but vacillates between both doctrines (536).<sup>72</sup>

So far, then, Lotze distances himself from idealism for three reasons: first, because of its excessive rationalism, which does not acknowledge the worth of feeling and sensation; second, because of its failure to explain the existence or actuality of ideas, or the agency that realizes them; and, third, because of its excessive monism, which does not give sufficient reality to the different modes of the absolute. It will soon become clear, however, that these are not the only reasons for his disenchantment with it. The greatest sin of idealism, it turns out, lay with its impersonal conception of the absolute, its denial of personality to the single infinite substance. While Schelling and Hegel recognized that the absolute has a subjective pole, that it must appear in finite minds, they denied that the absolute itself is personal or subjective. Lotze, for reasons we shall soon see,<sup>73</sup> defends the personal conception of the absolute.

So, in the end, Lotze's critique of idealism is not a repudiation but a refinement of his earlier teleological idealism. Lotze continued to uphold the central themes of that idealism in *Mikrokosmos*; but he was now careful to distinguish it from other forms of idealism, especially the absolute idealism of Schelling and Hegel. He chooses the term "spiritualism" to define his own position to avoid conflation with absolute idealism. The concept of spiritualism adds something to his earlier idealism—a personal conception of the absolute—though it does not take away anything from it.

## 7. *Amor Vincit Omnia*

We have already seen how it was the chief aim of *Mikrokosmos* to provide the reader with a complete worldview, a comprehensive understanding of the world that would do justice to art, morality and religion as well as the natural sciences. Lotze turns to that task only in the final book of *Mikrokosmos*, Book IX, which is meant to state the general worldview implicit in all the earlier parts. Such a statement could not come earlier, because the previous parts were supposed to examine specific issues and particular phenomena for their own sake, forswearing all preconceived principles (III, 459–460). The general worldview had to be the result, not the starting point of investigation. Now, however, that he came near the end of his labors, Lotze felt the need to show that the entire work forms a coherent whole after all, that there is one worldview behind it all from beginning to end (460).

What is this worldview? Lotze reveals all only at the very end. *Mikrokosmos* leaves its reader in suspense until the last section of its final chapter. There it concludes with an astonishing epiphany. Like Lotze, however, we cannot reveal that secret right away. For

<sup>72</sup> Lotze would return to this issue only in chapters six and seven of Book I of his 1879 *Metaphysik*, II, 135–190, §§68–97, though there too with inconclusive results.

<sup>73</sup> See section 8 of this chapter.

we can understand and appreciate it only when we grasp its necessity, only when we take the trouble to retrace the steps that slowly and gradually led up to it.

At the start of chapter 1 of Book IX Lotze prepares his reader for his final journey by restating the fundamental problem in formulating a unified worldview. The great challenge before him, he explains, is that there are three very different kinds of enquiry, the connection between which is utterly obscure (461). For our sense perception there are *facts*; for our understanding there are *truths*; and for our conscience there are *values*. Facts, truths and values are, however, very different. The realm of facts deals with existence, with what happens to be the case. The realm of truth concerns the necessary relations between propositions, where these relations are purely hypothetical and do not presuppose existence. The realm of values does not consist in logically necessary truths because it is possible for them to be otherwise; and it is indifferent to existence, because its norms still hold even if no one ever complied with them (461–462). Though they appear so different, these realms somehow have to be connected to form a unified conception of the world.

Chapter I of Book IX of *Mikrokosmos* is essentially a sustained reflection on the conditions for the intelligibility or systematic unity of the world. Lotze first examines the realm of fact or existence, then the realm of truth, and finally suggests how they must be interconnected to form a unified intelligible world. Throughout his argument he assumes that the world does indeed form a unified intelligible whole; his task is to determine only the necessary conditions of such an assumption. He does not intend his argument to respond to a radical skeptic, who would doubt such an assumption in the first place.

Beginning with the realm of existence, Lotze asks: In what does the being of things consist? What is it that makes something a thing? Our first natural attitude toward things, he tells us, is to identify them with their sense qualities. The thing is what is seen, what is heard, what is felt (466). But this naive view does not work, we quickly learn, because we also assume that the thing continues to exist even when we do not perceive it. We think of the thing as having relations to other things beside ourselves, and we regard how it appears to us as only one of its many possible relations. It is part of our natural attitude toward things, Lotze thinks, that we identify them by their relations with other things, by how one is like or unlike another. We tend to regard the thing simply as the sum total of its relations to other things (467). According to this view, to be is just to stand in determinate causal, spatial and temporal relations with other things. What cannot be cause or effect, what cannot be in a definite place in space or time, does not exist at all (467). Lotze defends this natural view because it specifies one necessary condition for the systematic unity of things. Namely, if things were entirely unique and incomparable, if they were utterly independent of one another, it would be impossible to form a single unified conception of the world (487).

Some philosophers question this view, however, on the grounds that a thing should be before it stands in relation to other things (470).<sup>74</sup> They argue that a thing must

<sup>74</sup> As usual Lotze does not mention any name; but, also as usual, he had Herbart in mind. See the parallel passage in *Grundzüge der Metaphysik*, §13 and *System der Philosophie* II, 27–44, §§1–14.

have an intrinsic identity, apart from and prior to its relations with others, for a thing still remains the same even when it changes its relations with other things. While Lotze admits that we can *in thought* abstract a thing from all its relations, he denies that any completely relationless thing exists (471, 474). The assumption that there is a thing existing independent of all its relations to other things is for him an hypostasis, the reification of an abstraction. If we were to assume that the thing does exist prior to its relations to all other things, we would later find it impossible to make it stand in relations with them (471–472). For there must be a sufficient reason why it stands in just this place rather than any other in the web of relations; and this reason will consist in its having stood in some prior set of relations; but *ex hypothesi* the thing is entirely relationless, so that there cannot be a sufficient reason for its coming into existence in the web of relations in any specific time or place. Having deprived the thing of its relations, we are condemned to keeping it outside the world forever, a weird substratum that remains in its own self-enclosed universe.

Having dealt with existence, Lotze now proceeds to the realm of truth (474f). The crucial question now concerns the connection between truth and existence, validity and fact. Since the realm of truth or validity consists in universal laws, the issue is how these laws relate to existence or fact. In other words: What makes general laws true of the world? Again, Lotze's task is a modest one. He does not attempt to prove that these laws must be true of the world; he only wants to specify the conditions under which they would be so. We have to recognize, he admits, that it is only contingent that things actually do stand in general law-like relations with one another (479). Though they must stand in relations to one another in order to be, there is no necessity that these be general law-like relations. It is still logically possible that things stand to one another in very complicated and different relations so that no general pattern emerges.

What makes general laws valid of things, Lotze argues, is that the relations they ascribe to things are not simply the work of the mind but grounded in things themselves (474). The mind does not invent (*erfinden*) these relations but finds (*finden*) them. A law does not state simply an abstract relation between general concepts but it presupposes that things are themselves related in this way (476). We must not imagine the realm of laws standing over and above things, as if it forces them to act in specific ways, for these laws exist only in things and are based upon them; they are really only the specific manner of acting of the things themselves (481). Just as a thing does not exist prior to its relations, so it does not exist prior to the laws it follows; its specific identity is determinable by its precise place in the web of laws (477).

So far, so good, it would seem. Lotze has laid down two conditions for the systematic unity of the world: 1) that the nature of a thing consists in its relations to other things; and 2) that these relations involve causal laws, according to which things interact in regular ways with one another. These are very minimal conditions of systematic unity, to be sure, but they also could not be taken for granted. To secure them Lotze had to argue against the view that things themselves are relationless, having a unique and incomparable nature. However, even this modest progress comes to an

abrupt stop, mired down by a question of consistency. For in the very next section Lotze seems to undermine both conditions by apparently denying the reality of relations and interaction. He explicitly contends not only that relations are derivative and extrinsic, but also that one should question their very reality (483). He goes on to argue that the very concept of an interaction between things is absurd, because it presupposes that a property or power detaches itself from one thing and reattaches itself to another (484). Indeed, the denial of interaction is precisely what we should expect from Lotze's occasionalism, which he had put forward in chapter 1 of Book III (I, 315–16).

What is going on? A patient reader soon learns that Lotze is preparing him for the conclusion of chapter 1, which is the first major step toward the epiphany. Although Lotze indeed questions the reality of relations and interaction, it is necessary to see that he is reasoning only hypothetically, spelling out the consequences of one very problematic premise. That premise is ontological pluralism, the thesis that the world consists in independent substances, each of them having a self-sufficient identity of their own. If we adopt that thesis, Lotze argues, then it becomes difficult to make connections between them (486, 487). Their relations will be entirely extrinsic so that the nature of the things themselves will be unknowable; and their interaction will be mysterious because the property or power of one thing cannot get up and float into another. The only way to avoid these problems, he insists, is to assume that there is a single infinite substance, of which all things are only parts (486, 488–489). There needs to be, in other words, only one independent and self-sufficient substance, which will be the universe as a whole. If we make this assumption, we can have all the interaction we want, for it will then be between the states of one and the same thing rather than between different things. Thus Lotze's argument in chapter 1 of Book IX ends with the declaration of monism, the thesis that only a single infinite substance explains the unity of the world:

Only when individual things are not independent, only when they are not left to swim in the void where no relation can reach them, only when they are all ...parts of a single comprehensive infinite substance, which nurtures them within itself, is interaction between them, or at least what we call such, possible. (486)

This single infinite substance comes as no surprise to the careful reader of *Mikrokosmos*. Lotze had already postulated it at the close of chapter 5 of Book III, and again in chapter 3 of Book IV, and for very similar reasons. There too he had argued that we can guarantee the unity of the world only if it consists in a single infinite substance, only if the interaction of all finite beings is really only the action of the infinite upon itself (I, 428–429; II, 46–47). Now, at the very close, he returns to his earlier theme, though with renewed purpose. What he had introduced only as a promise in Books III and IV he now intends to fulfill in Book IX. In those chapters he had only proposed the thesis that this concept could unite the realms of existence, truth and value; now he attempts to demonstrate it.

By the end of chapter 1, Book IX, Lotze had taken a major step toward such a demonstration. By postulating his single infinite substance he began to connect the realms of fact and truth, existence and validity. This substance provides an ontological guarantee that the realm of laws actually connects together the reality of things, so that the interconnections between things are not only extrinsic and not only appearances. Nevertheless, though that argument had gone far, it had still not gone far enough; it was still not sufficient to close completely the gap between fact and truth. The problem is that it joins the realm of fact with only one part of the realm of truth, viz., that found in the general laws of nature; but that leaves out of account the laws of logic, viz., the principles of identity, excluded middle and sufficient reason. What are to make of these laws? Are they purely formal rules of inference, prescriptions for thinking about things having nothing to do with things themselves? Or are they in some sense laws of being, describing the structure of existence among all possible worlds? Nothing Lotze wrote in chapter I of Book IX went toward an answer to this question. Only at the very end of the book, chapter 5 of Book IX, does he attempt to close this gap in his argument (III, 582–600). Now the question takes on a new aspect. Given that the realm of existence consists in a single infinite being, what relation do the laws of logic have to it? Are they valid in themselves, independent of the infinite and binding upon it? Or are they only the product of infinite power? This raised anew, as Lotze duly noted (581–582), an old theological controversy: whether the laws of logic bind the divine will or result from it?

Toward this dispute Lotze attempted to steer a middle path between the extremes. He rejected the old rationalist view that the eternal truths bind and limit the divine will as much as the voluntarist view that they are the consequence of it. The problem with the rationalist view is that it hypostasizes eternal truths, as if they were forms governing and constraining all forms of being. Taken by themselves, however, they do not exist at all; “for truths *are* not, they only *validate*” (*gelten*) (583). The difficulty with the voluntarist view is that it made truth into something arbitrary and stipulative. If eternal truths do not exist on their own, neither are they simply made, decrees and statutes (*Satzungen*) of the divine will (584). Although decrees and statutes are made, they are only the result of choice, the selection of one option over another, so that they lack the necessity of the eternal truths. In any case, the assumption of independent logical standards is difficult to avoid, because, for a decree or statute to be laid down, there must be some standard to determine whether it is possible and effective compared to others (584). On the same grounds there also cannot be an absolute creative activity that makes *all* truth; for there must be laws to determine what are the proper consequences of such a will. In a world where there is no truth at all we could not determine whether the divine will is a condition of truth, and whether truth is the result of the divine will (584–585). The old voluntarist argument that God must have the power to invalidate eternal truths, so that  $2 \times 2 = 4$  could be made into  $2 \times 2 = 5$ , still presupposes the validity of the law of identity itself; the only question is what particular truths are to be made instances of it (586–587).



The proper middle path between these extremes, Lotze maintains, is to regard eternal truths as necessary forms of acting of the divine nature itself (588–589). In that case they are not laws that constrain the divine will, for they are simply the ways in which it acts according to its own nature; nor are they simply decrees or fiat, because they are integral to the divine nature itself. The voluntarist would resist this, of course, on the grounds that the divine omnipotence means the power to do anything. But Lotze takes exception to this conception of the divine omnipotence, which he thinks turns it into a mere abstraction, the mere possibility to be anything without contradiction (588). If the concept of power is to have a definite meaning, he insists, then it must involve the concept of an activity, one that acts in *determinate* ways for *specific* ends (589). The eternal truths are then simply the determinate ways of acting of the infinite, the specific forms and manifestations of its nature (589). “The eternal truths are for us the ways of proceeding of [divine] creativity itself; they stand not before it but after it as laws to which the products of creative activity appear subject” (607).

Now that we have made the eternal laws of logic part of the divine nature, we have connected this part of the realm of laws and validity to that of fact and existence. But what about the realm of values? How do they relate to existence and truth? That basic question is still left outstanding. Lotze had already suggested his answer in chapter 1 of Book IX. There he confronted his reader with a painful choice. Either we assume that values conform to existence and truth, or we assume that existence and truth conform to values (III, 462). Or, as he formulates the choice at the close of Book III: either we make the good the product of nature, or we make nature the product of the good (I, 447). In both formulations, Lotze decides for the second option; and he advises against the first, which is for him that of naturalism or materialism. The reason he rejects the first option is not that it is morally questionable, and still less that it is logically incoherent; it is rather that it does not support the unity of the world, the interconnection of fact, truth and value. Naturalism and materialism make values epiphenomenal, as if they were completely superfluous, as if they played no role whatsoever in the constitution of existence and truth. We have already seen, however, the difficulties of that assumption.<sup>75</sup> If, then, we are to do full justice to the fundamental role of value in constituting these realms, we have to adopt the second option. We need to assume, in other words, that the world of existence, and the realm of laws, are only means for the realization of higher purposes and ends. Alternatively, we need to assume that the world exists only for the sake of an end, and that the laws holding over it are only necessary conditions for the realization of that end (III, 462).

The solution Lotze had only vaguely suggested in chapter 1 of Book IX takes on more concrete form in chapter 5, the concluding chapter of *Mikrokosmos*. Lotze now sees value as *primum inter pares*, the key to the unity of the universe, the connecting link between existence and truth. If we assume that the infinite acts for the good, i.e.,

<sup>75</sup> See sections 4 and 6 of this chapter.

that it has, in some sense yet to be determined, a will, then we can see existence as the realization of that good, and we can regard laws as the necessary means or manner in which it is realized (III, 609–610). The single uniting force behind the realms of existence, value and law would be then the divine will. To reflection, the analytical power of the intellect, this will appears in three distinct aspects. Its *goal* corresponds to the realm of value, its *realization* to the realm of existence, and its *manner of acting* to the realm of laws (III, 616). Hence there appear three realms, though there is in reality only one.

This bold and intriguing proposal immediately raises questions. What is this good? What is the end and direction of the divine will? It is in his answers to these questions, sketched in the penultimate section of *Mikrokosmos*, that Lotze declares his culminating insight, his epiphany about the secret of the universe. The highest good, the end and direction of the divine will, turns out to be nothing less than love. It is the divine love that unites the entire universe, that weds together the realms of value, existence and truth into a single whole. Love rules over all three realms. It rules over the realm of value because it is the highest good, and all values are only aspects of it or means toward it (616). It rules over the realm of existence because all of nature and history are created out of love and exist for its sake (617). And it rules over the realm of law, because the mechanism of nature, and even the general rules of logic, are the means and structure by which love creates and governs the world (618). Lotze even suggests that the law of identity, the basic principle of logic, is an appearance of the divine law, deriving from the value of fidelity to oneself (619).

The ethic of love that appears in the final chapter of *Mikrokosmos* takes the form of a personal confession. Lotze proposes it because it secures the unity he seeks; but he admits, and indeed stresses, that he cannot demonstrate its validity. All that he can do is explain its possibility and clear away some of its difficulties (III, 462–463). It is impossible to create a system of philosophy according to the idea of love, where love is the first principle and from it one derives the general structure of being, nature and history (III, 617–618). The problem is that we do not know enough about being, nature and history—let alone the infinite—to see how they derive from this single principle. In his final paragraph Lotze admits that his metaphysics of love will seem like mysticism and enthusiasm, and he concedes that it will have no power to convince materialists, let alone skeptics. But to them he declares: “...the view of the world as a whole is everywhere wonder and poetry; prose is only the limited and one-sided conception of a small part of the finite” (III, 623).

An astonishing and bold confession! And indeed a somewhat surprising one. For never is love mentioned or even suggested in the previous Books of *Mikrokosmos*. Even to the most careful reader its appearance comes as something of a revelation. Although Lotze had stressed the primacy of the ethical in his *Metaphysik* and *Logik*, so that the ultimate justification of metaphysics and logic lies with the concept of the good, he never explained the nature of that good. For someone whose philosophy is best described as “ethical idealism”, it is remarkable that he left the ethical so obscure

and inchoate. Now, at the very end of *Mikrokosmos*, the secret is finally revealed: the ultimate reality, the ultimate value, and indeed the ultimate truth, is love.

From a broader historical perspective, though, this confession is not that surprising. Though nothing in Lotze's published works prepares us for it, we have already seen it in his early unpublished fragments. In making this confession Lotze was only returning to his romantic roots. The idea that the world is poetry is the heart of romantic metaphysics just as love is the central value of romantic ethics. In making love into a metaphysical principle Lotze was going back to an idea that had once inspired all the early romantics, an idea that found its classical statement in Schiller's early "Theosophie des jungen Julius": that everything exists for and manifests the cosmic force of divine love.<sup>76</sup> Thus, in the culminating passages of his major work, Lotze continued to demonstrate his loyalty to the romantic tradition. *Mikrokosmos* was, from its very beginning to its very end, the confession of a romantic heart.

## 8. Philosophy of Religion

Lotze's postulate of a single infinite substance had introduced into *Mikrokosmos*, if only in a very abstract and implicit form, the concept of God. It is noteworthy, however, that Lotze resisted talking about this concept in religious terms. The argument for the postulate is entirely metaphysical: it is the only means to unify the realms of existence, value and truth. The concept could be, for all the meaning Lotze gave it so far, a mere philosophical construction. But in the penultimate chapter of *Mikrokosmos*, chapter 4 of Book IX, Lotze explicitly enters into the realm of religion. Now he admits that his substance has an additional religious meaning that cannot be derived from philosophy alone. He stresses that, somehow in ways still unspecified, it will have to answer the needs of religious faith. Such a requirement is what we should expect, given Lotze's agenda of reconciling reason with faith.

In introducing the topic of religion, Lotze reminds his reader that faith is more a matter of the heart than reason (III, 550). This reminder was tacitly directed against the materialists, whose critique of religion had failed to appreciate the *sui generis* aspect of the religious attitude toward the world. They had treated religion as if it were only a primitive cosmology, a kind of cheap metaphysics, when it involves more an aesthetic and ethical rather than a theoretical or metaphysical attitude. Following Schleiermacher and the romantic tradition, Lotze maintains that religion has its origin in feelings, intuitions and moods, not concepts, judgments and inferences. This means for him that religion forms its own autonomous sphere, standing outside the domain of philosophy, which is limited to reason alone. While reason deals only with hypothetical truths, with the logical relations between propositions, religion concerns matters of fact, viz., the existence of God, the soul and immortality (551). Whatever

<sup>76</sup> See Schiller's *Philosophische Briefe*, in *Werke, Nationalausgabe*, ed. Benno von Wiese (Weimar: Böhlau Nachfolger, 1962), XX, 107–129, esp. 119–122.

falls within the realm of existence has to be known by experience, so that it has to be sensed, felt or intuited rather than conceived, judged or demonstrated. Just as we know the existence of ordinary finite objects by means of experience, so we have to know the existence of the infinite by experience, which will consist in some form of revelation (551). Revelation could take two forms: historical fact or inner experience. The historical facts are the reports of miracles in the Bible; but these Lotze passes over in silence. For him the chief form of revelation is inner experience, the intuition or feeling of the infinite (552).

It is noteworthy that, though Lotze stresses the primacy of feeling and intuition in religion, he also recognizes that feeling and intuition alone do not provide knowledge. Our inner intuitions, like our sense intuitions, are by themselves blind and mute; they have their full meaning only when they are worked upon by reason, which analyzes, systematizes and criticizes them (552–553). By themselves they serve only as “data”, i.e., as evidence for claims to knowledge; and like all data, their meaning has to be interpreted, their value has to be assessed.<sup>77</sup>

Lotze stresses inner experience as the main source of evidence in religion not least because, writing after Kant’s critique of rational theology, he had lost confidence in the traditional proofs for the existence of God. In chapter 4 of Book IX of *Mikrokosmos* he passes in review the three main proofs—the cosmological, teleological and ontological—and finds them all wanting. The cosmological proof, which attempts to demonstrate the existence of an unconditioned first cause from the conditioned existence of everything in the world, shows at best the existence of *some* unconditioned cause; but it cannot show that there is *only one* such cause (III, 556). The teleological proof, which tries to prove the existence of an intelligent designer from the purposive order of nature, is a *non sequitur* because it cannot exclude the possibility that the apparent design of nature did not arise from the mechanical forces of nature alone (III, 557). Although it is perhaps improbable that the complex organisms of nature arose by mechanical causes alone, it is still not impossible. In any case, the teleological proof assumes that everything in nature is perfectly ordered and designed, though there is not sufficient evidence that this is really the case, given that nature seems to produce many superfluous and poorly adapted creatures (558).<sup>78</sup> The ontological proof in its traditional form, which attempts to infer God’s existence from his perfection, is an obvious fallacy, Lotze says. He does not explain why this is so, though he thinks that little more needs to be said after Kant’s critique of the argument (560).<sup>79</sup> Lotze is willing to grant that there is something to the ontological proof: that it is indeed an immediate certainty that the most beautiful, perfect and greatest being *ought* to exist; but he insists that we cannot logically demonstrate this certainty because what ought

<sup>77</sup> See the formulation in *Grundzüge der Religionsphilosophie*, “Zweite Auflage” (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1884), §4.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Chapter 2, Book IV of *Mikrokosmos*, II, 18–19, 28–29.

<sup>79</sup> In his *Grundzüge der Religionsphilosophie*, §6, Lotze accepts Kant’s argument that existence is not a predicate.

to exist need not exist (561). More importantly, he rejects decisively the very idea of necessary existence which is so crucial for the ontological proof. There is no such thing as a special species of necessary existence distinct from contingent existence. All existence is contingent in the sense that its non-existence is logically possible, i.e., one can affirm its non-existence without contradiction (555). The only necessity in the sphere of existence comes from being conditioned, i.e., when one thing is an effect from prior causes, though that is a sense of necessity hardly applicable to God as the unconditioned or first cause.

Lotze's rejection of the proofs for the existence of God seem to be at odds with his own argument throughout Book IX for the existence of a single infinite substance as the ground of the unity of the world. It is necessary to stress, however, that this argument is, as Lotze fully concedes, only hypothetical. In other words, it states: *If* there is such a unity, there must be such a substance. The existence of God in Lotze's system is, therefore, only a postulate; it is a desideratum of the unity of the world. Though reason, constantly striving for the unconditioned, demands systematic unity in its explanation of the world, it cannot demonstrate that such unity exists, that there is some being behind it. It is indeed still logically possible that the entire world consists in a chaos of atoms or a multitude of independent substances having no necessary connection with one another (III, 479). Nevertheless, Lotze could still respond to the materialists: *if* the demands of reason are to be met, as the materialists themselves wish, then it is necessary to assume the existence of a single infinite substance.

Lotze realized, however, that even if this argument were entirely successful, it would still not be enough. It addresses only one motive for faith in God. There are, however, two such motives: one theoretical or metaphysical, the other personal or ethical. While the postulate of the single infinite substance answers the metaphysical motive, it still does not address the personal one. Corresponding to each kind of motive there are two kinds of divine attribute. There are *metaphysical* attributes: unity, infinity, eternity, omnipresence and omnipotence; and there are *ethical* attributes: wisdom, justice and holiness. Seen in these terms, the postulate gives God his metaphysical attributes but not his ethical ones. If, however, Lotze were to remain true to his goal of reconciling faith with reason, he also had to defend faith in the ethical attributes.

This was, however, a task of a much taller order. For the ethical attributes of God seem to be obviously anthropomorphic, the reification of human attributes. That was indeed just the contention of Ludwig Feuerbach in his celebrated *Das Wesen des Christentums*, one of the most provocative and powerful critiques of religion in the nineteenth century.<sup>80</sup> This was a challenge Lotze simply could not ignore. Sure enough, though he never mentions him by name, Feuerbach is the intended target of much of chapter 4 of Book IX.

<sup>80</sup> See especially the "Einleitung" to the work in Feuerbach, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. Erich Thies (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976), V, 17–46.

Lotze's argument for the ethical attributes of God rests upon a single thesis: that God is a personal being, having the basic characteristics of personhood or subjectivity (i.e., self-awareness and will). While Lotze does not pretend to prove this thesis, he does intend to show that it does not suffer from the usual objections against it, and that it better satisfies religious faith than all modern conceptions of the impersonal nature of the divine (563). Lotze's positive argument in behalf of the personality of God is simple and straightforward: that the existence of the highest value is conceivable only in some personal form (563). His implicit reasoning seems to go like this: we conceive of God as the highest value; but since everything that is of value is so only for some person, the unconditional form of value has to be a person. So, as Lotze describes it, the idea of God as a personal being is the perfectly natural result of our normal conception of value, which attributes absolute value to persons alone. If God is the absolute value, he too must be a person.

Of course, there are problems with this simple argument, however accurate it might be as a reconstruction for the reasons for belief in a personal God. Not the least of them was Fichte's famous contention that the concept of an ego or person is intelligible only by contrast with something that is a non-ego or not a person. If this were so, the person or ego would have to be finite, limited by something that it is not. Lotze was greatly troubled by this argument, and went to great lengths in chapter 4 of Book IX to reply to it (III, 569–579). His central point against it is that it confuses the concept of an ego with the reality of the ego itself (III, 570–571). Although the *concept* of the ego is indeed thinkable only in contrast to the non-ego, the ego itself refers to an act of self-awareness that is primitive and requires no such contrast. The famous adage *omnes determinatio est negatio*, which is the basis for the argument, is really about our knowledge of being rather than being itself.<sup>81</sup>

Having thus freed self-awareness from its finite limits, Lotze believed that it is possible to attribute it even to an infinite being. He then went on to suggest a bold reversal of Feuerbach's whole argument. Rather than seeing the idea of an infinite personality as an extension of the finite, one might view the idea of a finite personality as a limitation of the infinite (III, 577). The central characteristics that we attribute to subjectivity—self-awareness and freedom—exist more completely and perfectly in the case of an infinite rather than finite being. Whenever we attribute these characteristics to finite beings, we presuppose, if only as an ideal, some being that has them to an unlimited extent.

Following the strategy that the best defense is offense, Lotze went on to defend his personal conception of the divine by attacking various impersonal conceptions. Current in his day there were three such conceptions: the moral world order, the absolute idea, and the single cosmic substance. Lotze subjects all to severe scrutiny.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Lotze's *Grundzüge der Religionsphilosophie*, §53.

It was Johann Gottlieb Fichte who, in an infamous essay, once advanced the conception of the divine as a moral world order.<sup>82</sup> Rejecting the conception of God as a personal entity, he contended that the only defensible conception of God is based on morality. We should conceive of God on ethical lines alone, he pleaded, so that it becomes equivalent to the moral order of the universe. According to that moral order, bad consequences never come from good intentions, good consequences never come from bad ones, due to the very moral structure of things. Though Lotze admired the motives behind this conception, he found it, taken strictly, barren and unsatisfying. If the divine were just a moral world order, it would be nothing more than a structure, a relationship among moral agents (565). At any rate, the conception seems plausible only because it still presupposes the idea of a personal creator and governor of the moral universe, for it makes little sense to talk about an order without some ordering creator and agency (566–567). How, indeed, could a mere blind mechanism ensure the success of virtue and the failure of vice? There had to be instead some intelligent agency to create and govern the moral order, some person to manage morality, to weigh the merits of souls to establish who deserves punishment or reward (566–568).

The conception of God as the absolute idea, which is found in Schelling and Hegel, was no more satisfactory to Lotze than that of the moral world order. An idea is by itself only a formula for thinking, and it is not really a reality at all (III, 574). To talk about ideas as if they were ultimate reality, we learn in chapter V of Book IX, is really only to hypostasize them (519–520). An idea or thought, when it appears in true sentences, has validity; but it does not *exist* on its own, except in the mind of some thinker. It is indeed absurd to talk about ideas as if they were active principles for the simple reason that ideas do not act by themselves. They stand in purely logical relations, viz., they are compatible or incompatible with one another; but they do not, like things, *act* on one another (520). Ironically enough, though it intends to eliminate anthropomorphism, the absolute idea, viewed as a *personification* of the idea, is an anthropomorphism itself.

Of all the conceptions of the divine as an impersonal being Lotze took most exception to pantheism. Perhaps this was because his own metaphysics came so close to it that he needed to distance himself from it? He admitted an affinity between his own monism and pantheism: both saw the divine as a single infinite substance (III, 568). Still, he stressed that he was otherwise poles apart from pantheism. While he made the world of matter and space a mere appearance of spirit, the pantheist made that world his ultimate reality (III, 568–569). The equation of pantheism with materialism is problematic, and it most likely reflects the pantheist views of the *Vormärz* period, which were often tinged with materialism. Lotze suggested that there could be a

<sup>82</sup> The essay, the spark that led to the famous atheism controversy, was “Ueber den Grund unseres Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung”, in Fichte, *Werke*, ed. I.H. Fichte (Berlin: Veit, 1843–6), V, 175–189. The classic treatment of the atheism controversy is that of Xavier Léon, *Fichte et son temps* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1954), I, 518–630.

more spiritualist form of pantheism, i.e., one that makes the single infinite substance into spirit; and he even conceded that he “would be able to approve of it” (*würden wir...bestimmen können*) on general metaphysical grounds (III, 569). But even so, he insists that he cannot share the religious attitude behind pantheism: the vision of human life as only a transitory mode of the single infinite substance (III, 569).

The main source of Lotze’s opposition to pantheism was indeed ethical. In chapter 5 of Book VI of *Mikrokosmos* he engaged in a more detailed polemic against pantheism, criticizing it on the grounds that it violates our most basic moral convictions about the significance of human life and individuality (II, 453–458). Although we might hold in theory that human life is completely explicable by mechanical causes, that it is an insignificant speck of dust in the cosmos as a whole, and that we will be utterly annihilated after death, the fact remains, Lotze insisted, that we cannot live by such beliefs. We live and act on the assumption that our lives will make a difference, that we have some special place and vocation in the cosmos as a whole (II, 457). Furthermore, we find it impossible to conceive our utter extermination because even in the abyss we imagine our own presence (II, 456). Not the least problem with pantheism is that, because it sees all actions as the product of the cosmic substance, it cannot give any place to the concept of moral responsibility (II, 454–455, 461). If the pantheist were to be consistent, he would in the end have to preach surrender to one’s natural impulses, the enjoyment of the moment and sensual pleasure (II, 455).

Although a sharp critic of the pantheistic conceptions of God, Lotze’s attitude toward them is far from complete rejection. He accepts crucial features from them; and indeed, rather than subtracting anything from them he only adds something to them: the concept of a person or spirit. Lotze’s God is still the single infinite substance; he is still the agent who creates and administers the moral world order; and he still governs the world according to ideas, which are the forms of his activity. It is for these reasons that it is necessary to be wary of the common description of Lotze as a “theist”. “Theism”, in its more specific sense, refers to belief in not only a personal but also an extramundane God.<sup>83</sup> Though Lotze’s God is personal, as the single infinite substance, it cannot be considered extramundane.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup> See *New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Sinclair Ferguson and David Wright (Downer’s Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988), 677.

<sup>84</sup> Though Lotze tries to soften this heterodox point in his *Grundzüge der Religionsphilosophie*, §§56–57.



## Practical Philosophy (Göttingen-Berlin, 1857–1881)

### 1. The Sultan's Idyll

By the early 1850s Lotze began to make his peace with Göttingen. He grew to like and appreciate his colleagues,<sup>1</sup> and the administration seemed to value him too, even if they underpaid him. Of course, Göttingen was provincial, but that also had its advantages. Here one could live cheaply, in more spacious dwellings, and close to the countryside. So Lotze began, quite literally, to cultivate his garden. Since 1849 all his residences in Göttingen were rural or semi-rural, so that he could grow his vegetables and keep a barn. Gardening was therapy from the stress of writing and lecturing. It was not least this pastoral idyll that kept Lotze in Göttingen. When in 1859 he thought he would have to accept an attractive offer from Leipzig, what seemed to trouble him most is that he would not be getting the wine from the grapes he was growing.<sup>2</sup> He told Fechner that it would be hard to get him to leave Göttingen because “I live here like a sultan on his estate”.<sup>3</sup>

Along with this idyll came seclusion. The longer Lotze stayed in Göttingen, the more he withdrew from social and political life.<sup>4</sup> The intellectual ambitions he had set for himself demanded time, tranquility and solitude, and his semi-rural life provided that. Lotze did his best to organize his life around his work. His study was set apart from the rest of the house, sometimes in the garret, and there he would retire to write for most of the day. Travel, concerts, theatre and social engagements were kept to a minimum. Lotze lived like a hermit, and it suited him. Though he had once enjoyed the salons of Leipzig, he preferred life in his “hermitage” over “the noise of the city”.<sup>5</sup>

Still, Göttingen was no paradise. Lotze had two major problems with his position there. One was the stature of philosophy in the university. Since 1848 philosophy had ceased to be a required subject in the curriculum, which now stressed vocational training. The demands of study in law, theology and medicine had become so many

<sup>1</sup> Lotze to Solomon Hirzel, August 8, 1859, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 359.

<sup>2</sup> Lotze to Solomon Hirzel, July 29, 1859, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 352.

<sup>3</sup> Lotze to Fechner, End of 1866, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 448.

<sup>4</sup> See Carl Stumpf, “Zum Gedächtnis Lotzes”, *Kant Studien* 22 (1918), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Lotze to Hirzel, August 8, 1859, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 359.

and so severe that there was little time left for the liberal arts or a general education. Lotze complained about the vocational culture and the indifference of students regarding philosophy. It seemed that most of his interested students were foreigners, and that his German students were uninterested in life's great questions. The other, more serious, problem concerned the economic security of his family. Since Lotze had no family inheritance, and since he also had no savings, there was nothing for his family to fall back upon should he die. The thought that his wife and children would be destitute in the event of his death greatly worried him. To make matters worse, the *Gotha Lebensversicherungsanstalt*, an organization that issued insurance policies for public employees, refused to sell Lotze a policy on health grounds. Though his doctor testified to his good health, he had been sick often enough to disqualify himself.

These problems were enough for Lotze to consider leaving Göttingen. Indeed, he wrote Hirzel in July 1859 that some change in his situation was "utterly necessary".<sup>6</sup> If that meant quitting his Göttingen idyll, then so be it. Fortunately, Lotze never had to seek employment elsewhere; for one offer after another came to him. By the early 1850s his fame had grown throughout Germany, and he now had a reputation as the sole philosopher who could keep alive the tradition of speculative philosophy. The publication of the first volume of *Mikrokosmos* had only increased his stature. Lotze, it seemed, was one of the few philosophers who could write about major issues in a popular style, who knew the empirical sciences, who was no mere disciple of Hegel or Herbart, and who had his own original worldview.

The first offer—or prospect of one—came from Berlin. This was an opportunity that would tempt, test and trouble Lotze. For any German academic in the later half of the nineteenth century, Berlin was the great prize. There was not only the cultural life of the Prussian capital, but there was the prestige of the university, which had become the most famous in Germany. To be called to Berlin meant that one would be at the center of things, that one would have an influence on the public. In 1853, with the death of G.A. Gabler, a Hegelian, a position became vacant in Berlin. The best man for the job, many believed, was Lotze. The main spokesman for the efforts to recruit him was no less than Trendelenburg, who was now dean of the philosophical faculty. A selection committee was duly formed, led by Trendelenburg and composed of some great Berlin luminaries, among them Bopp, Boeckh and Ranke. The committee decided unanimously for Lotze, so that Trendelenburg could write a strong recommendation for his appointment to the Cultural Ministry.<sup>7</sup> Trendelenburg and his peers were attracted to Lotze because they were impressed with his independent standpoint, and because he attempted to fuse philosophy with the empirical sciences. And, doubtless, Trendelenburg saw in Lotze a congenial spirit.

<sup>6</sup> Lotze to Hirzel, July 9, 1859, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 339.

<sup>7</sup> See Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg: Sitzungsprotokoll, November 27, 1853, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 239–242; and "Antrag der Philosophischen Fakultät der Berliner Universität", December 22, 1853, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 243–247.

But it was only from hearsay that Lotze learned about the efforts on his behalf in Berlin. All he had heard is that the Ministry was interested in him, but that it was in no hurry to make an appointment.<sup>8</sup> “No hurry” was to put it mildly. Lotze waited for the offer, but nothing happened, for years. Trendelenburg’s “application” to the Ministry recommending his appointment seemed to get lost in the bureaucracy. Apparently, financial constraints played an important role in the delay.<sup>9</sup> As late as March 1859 Lotze complained about the endless waiting, “*diese resulttlose Quälerei*”, which had prevented him from considering other opportunities.<sup>10</sup>

By July 1859 another opportunity did come his way. The new cultural minister in Saxony, Johann Paul Freiherr von Falckenstein, was very interested in expanding the university in Leipzig and making prestigious appointments to compete with Berlin. Lotze would be a real prize for the philosophy faculty, where there was now a vacant chair. After learning from a Dresden official of Lotze’s possible interest in returning to Leipzig,<sup>11</sup> Falckenstein made an attractive offer: full voting rights in the philosophy faculty and 1800 thalers salary per annum, which was more than Göttingen was offering him.<sup>12</sup> This was an offer Lotze took very seriously, not only because the Leipzig curriculum gave more importance to philosophy, but also because it meant returning to his fatherland and old friends. Once again Lotze proved an effective bargainer. He told the university officials that moving back to Leipzig had its inconveniences, and that the offered salary was not so competitive, thus hinting that more effort was required on their part. What he wanted most of all, he made plain, was some pension or insurance for his family. If Leipzig could offer him full pension rights, plus 2000 thalers in salary, he was willing to leave behind those ripening juicy grapes in his garden.<sup>13</sup>

In the meantime, Adolf von Warnstadt, privy councillor for university affairs in Hannover, had gotten wind about the latest conspiracy from Dresden. He gave an urgent address to the Cultural Ministry, stressing the importance of retaining Lotze for Göttingen, and recommending an immediate salary increase, an extra 300 thalers more per annum. After hearing of this counteroffer, Lotze told the Ministry that, though he was grateful for the salary increase, he would still have to continue negotiations with Dresden.<sup>14</sup> After all, he had to think of a pension for his wife and children. Lotze had been told, unofficially, that Dresden was ready to pay not only the 2000 thalers but also the full pension. He was on the verge of deciding to return to Leipzig when he discovered that this was not true.<sup>15</sup> Dresden stuck to its original offer: only

<sup>8</sup> Lotze to Solomon Hirzel, March 3, 1859, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 254.

<sup>9</sup> Solomon Hirzel to Lotze, June 6, 1859, i *Briefe und Dokumente*, 338.

<sup>10</sup> Lotze to Solomon Hirzel, March 6, 1859, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 330.

<sup>11</sup> D. Gilbert to Lotze, July 4, 1859, and Lotze to D. Gilbert, July 9, 1859, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 339, 340.

<sup>12</sup> Johann Paul Freiherr von Falkenstein to Lotze, July 16, 1859, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 340.

<sup>13</sup> See Lotze to Solomon Hirzel, July 29, 1859, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 352.

<sup>14</sup> Lotze to Kuratorium, July 23, 1859, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 351.

<sup>15</sup> Lotze to Hirzel, July 29, 1859, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 352.

1800 thalers in salary and less than the full pension. Now, however, Göttingen declared itself willing to pay the full pension. Though his salary would be less in Göttingen, the cost of living there was also less than Leipzig. And so the decision was made for Göttingen. With no need to worry more about his family, Lotze could now, as he put it, “admire the Göttingen cow herds”.<sup>16</sup>

Four years after turning down Leipzig, Lotze received another offer, this time from Tübingen, where a position fell vacant after the retirement of I.H. Fichte.<sup>17</sup> The Tübingeners were, however, pushing their luck if not their generosity. Their offer seemed generous enough: 1600 thalers and a full pension. But that fell short of what Lotze had already rejected from Leipzig, so the decision against Tübingen was inevitable. Warnstedt, ever wary to protect the crown jewel of his faculty, had heard about the Tübingen offer and immediately sent Lotze the usual letter telling him he would do all he could to retain him.<sup>18</sup> But in his negotiations regarding the Tübingen offer Lotze, for once, overplayed his hand. Though he could not improve his financial position, he would try to address the curricular issue that troubled him. He told Karl Lichtenberg, then Kurator of Göttingen University, that he would decline the Tübingen offer if he could get some statement of willingness on the part of the administration to make philosophy a more integral part of the curriculum.<sup>19</sup> But administrators, then as now, have a much easier time raising salaries than they do changing curricula. Though Lichtenberg expressed his sympathies with Lotze’s views about the place of philosophy in curriculum, he reminded him that it was not in his power to change the curriculum, especially in the case of the legal faculty, whose plan of study had been laid down by statute. Only in the case of the theology faculty was there the prospect of making philosophy a required course of study. Though annoyed by Lichtenberg’s response, Lotze could do little more than back down.<sup>20</sup> He had to decline the Tübingen offer after gaining little more than an increase in his wife’s pension.

Three years after the Tübingen affair, in December 1866, the Berliners had finally organized themselves and made an offer to Lotze.<sup>21</sup> But it was now a case of too little too late. Lotze’s most pressing financial needs had already been met by the counteroffer

<sup>16</sup> Lotze to Hirzel, July 29, 1859, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 352. There was another factor playing against Lotze’s decision to return to Leipzig. If he were to have full rights in the faculty, this would give him a better position than Weiße, who was never given such rights. Lotze did not want to slight his old teacher; but he also did not want to be excluded from the faculty. Lotze stresses the importance of this dilemma in deciding against Leipzig in his letter from the end of 1866 to Fechner, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 448. It is noteworthy, however, that Lotze does not mention this as a factor in his July 29 and August 8, 1859, letters to Hirzel, which explains his motives for remaining in Göttingen.

<sup>17</sup> Silcher to Lotze, September 1, 1863, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 405–406.

<sup>18</sup> Adolf von Warnstedt to Lotze, September 22, 1863, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 414–415.

<sup>19</sup> See Lotze to Karl Lichtenberg, September 20, 1863, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 411.

<sup>20</sup> See Lotze to Karl Lichtenberg, September 29, 1863, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 419–420; and Lotze to Adolf von Warnstedt, September 29, 1863, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 419. Cf. Lotze to Adolf von Warnstedt, September 25, 1863, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 417–418.

<sup>21</sup> Lotze to Justus Olshausen, December 1866, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 445–446.

against Leipzig. At first sight the Berliners' offer seemed very generous: 2000 thalers per annum in salary. That was more than he now received in Göttingen; but in real terms that meant little because one-third of one's salary would have to be spent on rent in Berlin. So the Berlin offer was not enough to tempt Lotze away from his Göttingen idyll. It is remarkable how Lotze, in explaining his decision to stay in Göttingen, stressed the attractions of his semi-rural life there. He told Hirzel that he could see no advantage to living in a third-floor flat in Berlin. There would be no greenery or fresh food in that landscape of stone. Lotze also convinced himself that students in Berlin were no more interested in philosophy than those in Göttingen. Trendelenburg had been there for thirty years and still had not been able to motivate them. So Lotze wrote to Warnstedt, January 11, 1867, that he had no intention of accepting the Berlin offer. A move to Berlin would be only "a source of discomfort and discontent".<sup>22</sup> To be sure, he would have a greater audience in Berlin than Göttingen; but the way to reach the public nowadays was more through the written than the spoken word. He could do more for his subject by writing books in his Göttingen garret than giving lectures in a Berlin auditorium.

But it was not so easy to turn down Berlin. Political events had overtaken the matter, so that Lotze was no longer a free agent. The citizen of Hannover had now become a subject of Prussia. Since the War of 1866 the Kingdom of Hannover had ceased to exist and had become a part of Prussia. This meant that Heinrich von Mühler, the new Prussian cultural minister installed in Hannover, had in principle the right to *command* Lotze to accept the Berlin offer. Would Lotze dare disobey his new rulers by declining the Berlin offer? That would require considerable diplomacy. His January 19, 1867, letter to von Mühler is a masterpiece of tact and persuasion.<sup>23</sup> Lotze thanks Mühler for the great honor done him by the "gracious demand" (*die gnädige Aufforderung*) that he accept the appointment in Berlin. While he does not dare to refuse it outright, he points out the great personal difficulties in his complying with it. He doubts if his health is up to the rigors and stress of a move to the Prussian capital, a city that he has never visited and that is completely alien to him. To maintain his frail physical condition, he needs country air and rural life. Since Hannover is now part of Prussia, Lotze could do more for his new fatherland by staying in Göttingen than by going to Berlin. His contributions to Prussian culture will be through his writings, which are better produced by staying at home. Furthermore, to have the same quality of life in Berlin as he had in Göttingen, he would need more money, and he does not want to make additional requests on the public treasury. To all these considerations Lotze added a stunning clincher: that he was expecting another offer from Leipzig! If he were to be a true patriot, he would have to accept that offer, for Saxony was his real fatherland. So putting pressure on him to go to Berlin would only have the effect of pushing him toward Leipzig.

<sup>22</sup> Lotze to Adolf von Warnstedt, January 11, 1867, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 452.

<sup>23</sup> Lotze to Heinrich von Mühler, January 19, 1867, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 455–457.

After that letter, Von Mühler had little choice but to graciously withdraw his “gracious demand”. Lotze was now off the hook. Apparently, the new Prussian administration did not want to spoil its new provinces by depriving it of all talent.<sup>24</sup> So Lotze could breathe a sigh of relief that he had not become war booty. Despite the pressure on him from his new Prussian masters, Lotze did not surrender the new bargaining position that came with the renewed offer from Leipzig. He told the Göttingen administration that he would not go to Leipzig only if he received an appropriate counteroffer to the tune of 2000 thalers.<sup>25</sup> Forever fearful of losing Lotze, Göttingen quickly capitulated, giving Lotze the extra money to match the Dresden offer.

Once again, then, Lotze improved his condition through skillful negotiation. He could now enjoy his pastoral sultanate with all the satisfaction that economic security brings. He expected and hoped that he could now end his days in Göttingen. But, as we shall soon see, fate had other plans for him.

## 2. Ethics

It was only in his later Göttingen years that Lotze began to work intensively on what he called his “practical philosophy”, i.e., ethics, politics and philosophy of history. *Mikrokosmos* contains extensive accounts of his philosophy of history and theory of the state. But its treatment of the principles of ethics is very sketchy. There is but a single chapter devoted to the topic, chapter 5 of Book V, “Das Gewissen und die Sittlichkeit”<sup>26</sup>, though it is superficial and perfunctory, raising more questions than it answers. Lotze became clear about his ethics, and the outlines of his practical philosophy as a whole, only in the 1860s and 1870s by lecturing on the topic; from 1850 to 1880 he gave nine lecture courses devoted to it.<sup>27</sup> After his death, Eduard Rehnisch, a devoted student, published the notes from the last 1880 lectures in a little tract under the title *Grundzüge der praktischen Philosophie*.<sup>28</sup> Though its exposition is dense and sketchy, this brief book provides the best conspectus of Lotze’s ethics and politics.

It was one of the great shortcomings of Lotze’s philosophy that, though its logic and metaphysics give primacy to practical reason, it had a very underdeveloped ethics. To be fair, Lotze appears to have been aware of this deficiency and labored mightily to remedy it. The point of the many lectures on practical philosophy was to provide the basis for a more formal treatise. Volume III of his *System der Philosophie* was supposed to contain an ethics alongside an aesthetics and religious philosophy.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, Lotze did not live to write that volume. All that we have instead is a late essay from his

<sup>24</sup> See Lotze to Gustav Theodor Fechner, February 1, 1867, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 464.

<sup>25</sup> Lotze to Heinrich von Mühler, January 31, 1867, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 464.

<sup>26</sup> *Mikrokosmos* II, 308–342.

<sup>27</sup> Rehnisch, “Zur Biographie”, 105–113.

<sup>28</sup> Hermann Lotze, *Grundzüge der praktischen Philosophie* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1882).

<sup>29</sup> See the “Vorwort” to Volume II, *System der Philosophie*.

*Nachlaß*, titled by its editor “Nachgelassener Aufsatz über die Prinzipien der Ethik”,<sup>30</sup> which contains ideas that probably would have been used in the introduction to volume III. Though very short, this essay was polished and complete, and it was intended for publication, after an English translation, in the *Contemporary Review*.<sup>31</sup> For obscure editorial reasons,<sup>32</sup> the article never appeared. In the end, all that Lotze published on ethics in his lifetime was the short chapter from *Mikrokosmos* and three substantial reviews.<sup>33</sup>

Incompleteness, however, is not the greatest problem with Lotze's ethics. There are more troubling questions of consistency, which are indeed so vexing that it is questionable whether Lotze has a coherent ethics at all. One such issue arises from the rationalist and empiricist sides of Lotze's ethics. At best, they do not support one another; at worst, they undermine one another. The rationalist side appears in Lotze's defense of the universality and necessity of ethical precepts, their claim to be valid imperatives for any intelligent being. The empiricist side emerges in his insistence that we can distinguish good from evil only by means of pleasure, which is the *ratio cognoscendi* or criterion of all value. These two aspects of his ethics leave us with a difficult question: How is it possible to justify universal and necessary precepts on the basis of experience alone? It seems that we cannot, in which case Lotze leaves morality with an insufficient foundation.

The rationalist aspect of Lotze's ethics appears most explicitly in his *Nachlaß* essay, which was probably written in 1880, and so represents his final views. Here Lotze poses the main problem of the foundation of ethics in terms of a conflict between rationalism and empiricism. The rationalist holds that there are innate moral principles that are universal and necessary for all intelligent beings, whereas the empiricist maintains that all moral principles have to be based upon experience alone. Lotze makes it very clear that in this dispute he takes the side of the rationalist, whom he wishes to defend against empiricist objections (523). He agrees with many of the traditional empiricist criticisms of rationalism, viz., that we need experience to be aware of any general principles; and he admits that the rationalist has not expressed his main point well by insisting on the existence of innate ideas (523–524). Nevertheless, he endorses the main point that the rationalist intends to make: that there are universal and necessary moral commands, and therefore precepts whose validity is completely independent of their origin in experience (530). The fundamental mistake of the empiricist lies in thinking that he can justify or refute ideas simply by showing their origins, whereas

<sup>30</sup> *Kleine Schriften*, III/2, 521–542.

<sup>31</sup> See David Piepers editorial introduction to volume III of *Kleine Schriften*, III/1, LV–LX.

<sup>32</sup> On the reasons for its non-publication, see Piepers editorial introduction to volume III of *Kleine Schriften* III/1, XL–XLVI.

<sup>33</sup> Review of Gustav Hartenstein, *Die Grundbegriffe der ethischen Wissenschaften* in *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeigen*, Stück 124–127 (1845), 1241–1272, (reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* I, 268–290); review of H. Krause, *Über die Wahrhaftigkeit, ein Beitrag zur Sittenlehre*, *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeigen*, Stück 4–7 (1846) 38–60 (reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* I, 342–358); and review of Gustav Theodor Fechner *Über das höchste Gut*, *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeigen*, Stück 3–5 (1847), 28–43 (reprinted in *Kleine Schriften* II, 272–283).

the question of their validity has to be decided by their intrinsic merits alone (526). Just how Lotze intends to justify moral principles by their intrinsic merits, however, is never made clear. There cannot be any theoretical proof of them, he argues, because they are normative principles, and no amount of theoretical knowledge about what is the case ever proves anything about what ought to be the case (535). We know that moral principles are binding, it seems, through the deliverances of conscience alone, which are infallible, though only on a very general level. The disagreements in the moral sphere arise not from the principles themselves but simply from their application to very different and very complex circumstances (532). Lotze is even confident that more a priori reflection on the principles of ethics will help to simplify and clarify them to the point that disagreements will be nearly eliminated or at least greatly limited (534). While ethics will never have the certainty and clarity of mathematics, it can at least approximate such status and make progress toward achieving greater agreement.

The rationalist position of the *Nachlaß* essay contrasts sharply with the empiricist standpoint of the *Mikrokosmos* chapter. We now learn that it is only sensibility, the capacity of feeling pleasure and pain, that allows any living being to determine the value of things: "...pleasure is the light in which every objective excellence and beauty first truly begins to shine." (II, 322). A purely rational being, who had no capacity for feeling whatsoever, would not be able to distinguish between good and evil (II, 314, 317). We determine what produces pleasure or pain, of course, only by means of experience, by seeing what effects different objects have upon our sensibility (II, 323). Pleasure and pain are not only the sole criterion to determine value, but also the sole incentives and motives behind human action (II, 314). Following these empiricist principles, Lotze rejects Kant's attempt to provide a purely rational or a priori foundation for morality. His categorical imperative on its own amounts to nothing more than the demand for consistency, which all precepts can satisfy. The categorical imperative seems effective only because we read general consequences into it, i.e., we imagine what the consequences would be like if everyone were to act according to a maxim (II, 317–318). In the *Nachlaß* essay Lotze was explicit that experience could be useful only in determining means to ends, which would have to be determined by conscience alone (535). In *Mikrokosmos*, however, we learn that pleasure is vital to determine ends themselves (II, 319, 323), and we are even warned against giving too much weight to conscience, not only because its deliverances differ from one culture to another, but also because a limited but well-engrained education can give cultural precepts "the most perfect appearance of absolute evidence" (II, 312).

Admittedly, the contrast between these writings is not black or white. There are empiricist elements in the *Nachlaß* essay, rationalist elements in the *Mikrokosmos* chapter. Even in the *Nachlaß* essay, Lotze maintains that there cannot be a purely formal foundation of morality, and that morality needs to be given a content through experience (539). And in *Mikrokosmos* he still insists that there is at least one innate feature of human morality, which is the belief in unconditional or absolute values (II, 338).



There is still a marked difference between the two writings, however, regarding the breadth or content that they give to the innate dimension of morality. The *Nachlaß* essay states that there are general principles of morality in all cultivated nations, and it implies that there are several innate principles (though it does not specify them). The *Mikrokosmos* chapter, however, gives the innate a purely formal status alone, so that it amounts to little more than the mere idea of absolute value (II, 338, 339).

Any hope that the contrast will diminish further, that there will eventually be a point of convergence between the rationalist and empiricist sides of Lotze's ethics, is doomed to disappointment. When we look at the first chapter of Lotze's *Grundzüge der praktischen Philosophie*, which attempts to treat systematically the first principles of morals, we find the basic tension reappearing all the more starkly and plainly.<sup>34</sup> On the one hand, Lotze insists on the rationalist doctrine that moral principles bind unconditionally, and that they should hold for any rational being, not only human beings with their sensibility (§§3, 5, 9). We are also told with no less firmness that the voice of conscience speaks in unconditional commands (§§5, 9). On the other hand, however, Lotze sticks stubbornly to his empiricism, emphasizing again that nothing can be of value to a being incapable of feeling pleasure or pain (§7). Nowhere does Lotze seem to realize the gap between these positions, that empirical means are insufficient for such absolute ends.

It might seem that we can find consistency between the empiricist and rationalist sides of Lotze's ethics if we attribute something like a rule-utilitarian doctrine to him. According to this strategy, we make the fundamental principle of morality "Always act according to that rule or principle that, usually or on the whole, creates the greatest happiness for the greatest number". Rather than acting according to individual judgment on each individual occasion, as the act utilitarian bids us, we follow rules and principles because of their general reliability in producing good consequences. The apparent advantages of such a doctrine are clear: not only do we give morality a content, which Lotze wants, but we also salvage something like the general authority of moral principles, which he also wants. But this strategy does not work for one simple reason: no one rejects rule utilitarianism more explicitly and emphatically than Lotze himself. In the *Nachlaß* essay he argues against the value of appealing to general rules if they are valid only on the average or on the whole (537). If they are valid only in this qualified manner, he argues, we should be able to depart from them in exceptional circumstances, so that they lose their unconditional necessity and universality. This was the classic objection against rule utilitarianism, and Lotze explicitly endorses it.

So the tension between the rationalism and empiricism of Lotze's ethics remains. Its rationalism demands unconditional principles having a universal and necessary validity; and its empiricism advises following the contingent and particular results of experience. But from the particular and contingent content of experience no universal

<sup>34</sup> "Von den Prinzipien", §§1–9.

and necessary principle follows. We are left wondering, then, how the principles of morality will receive the sanction Lotze demands of them.

Another vexing question of consistency arises with regard to Lotze's views on freedom of the will. We have already seen how Lotze affirms the universal validity of the principle of mechanism, according to which all events in nature fall under general laws of cause and effect. Lotze had affirmed that principle not only for the realm of physics or external nature but also for the domain of psychology itself, so that all mental events too should fall under such general laws. In chapter three of *Grundzüge der praktischen Philosophie*, however, Lotze argues that moral responsibility requires a strong conception of freedom of the will, according to which the will has the choice between opposing courses of action (§17). This conception of freedom of the will, we are told in no uncertain terms, excludes the possibility that the principle of mechanism applies to the will's decisions (§19). The will is free only if it has the power of spontaneity, the ability to begin a causal series on its own, not having some prior cause to determine it into action (§21). This tension between mechanism and freedom of will only increases when Lotze rejects all versions of compatibilism, i.e., all attempts to make freedom of the will compatible with some form of causal necessity (§19). The view that freedom means acting according to the necessity of one's nature he rejects on the grounds that it makes us subject to the constraint of that nature. Lotze leaves us with a straightforward conflict between freedom and necessity, because his conception of freedom demands that we can choose and act otherwise, whereas necessity would mean that we have to decide and act only in one determinate way (§19). Thus it seems that Lotze cannot escape the classical dilemma between moral responsibility and mechanism.

What maneuvers does he take to avoid it? There are passages in the *Grundzüge* where he attempts to limit the principle of mechanism. We are now told that the principle applies to only *changes* in the natural world. We cannot apply it to everything, because the existence of the natural world itself does not have a cause (§21). Lotze then suggests: If we can allow spontaneous causes in the beginning of the world, why not allow them in the world itself (§21)? This would seem to be a straightforward violation of the principle of mechanism; but Lotze seems to envisage these spontaneous causes going on deep inside the psyche of moral agents, having nothing to do with their actions in the physical or phenomenal world (§23).

In the end Lotze leaves the advocate of moral responsibility with very little: the mere *possibility* that there are spontaneous acts of the will. He admits that this possibility cannot be demonstrated; but he contents himself with the possibility that it cannot be refuted. All appeals to inner experience to prove the reality of freedom do not work, he realizes, because we might not be aware of all the causes of our decisions and actions. But neither does experience prove that we are not free: statistical laws show us only what we have decided and do not make decisions for us; and retrospective inner experience can be mistaken that a cause or motive was decisive when it was not really so at the time of choice and action (§20). Lotze concedes that these causes will be

mysterious and obscure; but he then warns us against judging something impossible simply because we cannot understand it (§23).

A final question of consistency concerns the status of pleasure in Lotze's ethics. Does Lotze maintain that pleasure is the sole value and end of human action? Or does he think that it is only the criterion of value, the means of knowing that something is valuable? Lotze has been charged with inconsistency on just these grounds.<sup>35</sup>

On this score, however, Lotze can be absolved from criticism. If we read carefully and closely the texts bearing on this issue—*Mikrokosmos* chapter 5 of Book V, and *Grundzüge* chapter 1—a clear and consistent position emerges.<sup>36</sup> Namely, Lotze holds that pleasure is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of the good. It is a *necessary* condition of the good because something can have a value only if it is perceptible as pleasant by some sentient being. Thus Lotze states in *Mikrokosmos*: "...the thought of something unconditionally valuable that does not prove its value through its capacity for the production of pleasure, goes beyond itself and what it wants to say" (II, 316). And we are told no less explicitly in the *Grundzüge*: "It is correct and remains true that, apart from any feeling of the stimulated mind, there is no objective worth present in things and their relations" (§8). Pleasure is not a *sufficient* condition of the good, however, because, as Lotze argues, the concept of pleasure on its own is incomplete and abstract. We cannot conceive the feeling of pleasure as such but need to ask about what we are taking pleasure in. Pleasure in general does not exist anymore than color in general does; it must have some determinate form or shape, which must be specified by its particular object. What specific pleasures we have depends as much on the determinate characteristics of the object that causes them as the subject who enjoys them; and these characteristics are also a necessary condition of good or value. Hence Lotze stresses in the *Grundzüge*: "...the mind that feels pleasure does not produce of itself the distinguishing characteristics of the different feelings of pleasure" (§8). It is not the act of the subject, for example, that makes the pleasure in a minor chord different from that of a major chord.

Thus there is no easy answer to the question whether Lotze is a "hedonist", i.e., someone who maintains that pleasure is the sole good. He is a hedonist insofar as he holds that pleasure is a necessary condition of the good; but he is not one insofar as he maintains that it is not a sufficient condition. Lotze explicitly rejects the standard hedonist theory that pleasure is uniform and differs only *quantitatively* in terms of intensity and duration. He defends the view that there are *qualitatively* distinct forms

<sup>35</sup> See Vida Moore, *The Ethical Aspect of Lotze's Metaphysics* (New York: Macmillan, 1901), 20–36.

<sup>36</sup> Moore, *The Ethical Aspect of Lotze's Metaphysics*, 25, examines the same texts but does not read them correctly. The main evidence cited for Lotze holding straightforward hedonism is a passage from *Grundzüge* §5: "Jedes Handeln gehe von Natur auf einem *Zweck*; es müsse daher ein solcher Zweck von *unbedingtem* Werthe gesucht werden, der nicht bloß Mittel für einen andern Zweck ist. Ein solcher sei *nur die Lust*, diesen Ausdruck in seiner weitesten und eben deswegen nicht verächtlichen Bedeutung genommen." It is noteworthy that this passage is in the subjunctive. Lotze is stating the eudemonist position, which he then proceeds to reject in the following paragraph.

of pleasure whose specific qualities depend on their specific object. But to complicate matters even further, Lotze himself seemed to swither on the proper designation for his views. Almost without qualification he endorsed Fechner's "eudemonism", which was a very simplistic form of eudemonism on par with Bentham's.<sup>37</sup> But he later distanced himself from "eudemonism".<sup>38</sup>

Whatever the inconsistencies of Lotze's ethics, it is important to see that his failure to develop a clear and consistent ethics was not simply accidental, the result of insufficient time and energy. It was also to a significant extent systematic, the consequence of his philosophical convictions. For Lotze gave ethics a subordinate place to metaphysics, making the answer to its most fundamental questions depend on intractable metaphysical issues. Hence metaphysics would always have priority over ethics for him. Lotze was no believer in the autonomy of ethics, its independence as a discipline apart from metaphysics and religion. He did not think it possible to provide a sufficient or complete foundation for morality by examining human nature alone, as the empiricists had advised, or by consulting pure reason alone, as the rationalists had recommended. Rather, he insisted that ethics depends upon metaphysics, because to know what we ought to do we must first know the place of man in the universe. The fundamental question of ethics was for Lotze that of the highest good, i.e., what is the ultimate value that makes life worth living? But he connected that question with another metaphysical, even religious, one, i.e., what is the vocation of man? The vocation of man was understood to be what God calls upon man to do, which was defined by his place within the plan of providence as a whole. If we could only know the vocation of man, we could then know our moral obligations. The importance of this old religious conception of the world for Lotze's ethics appears in a striking passage from chapter 5, Book V, of *Mikrokosmos*:

We believe ourselves called upon to collaborate in the construction of a supersensible world order; and however unclear the plan, and the meaning of our contribution to it, might remain, we still feel that everything that appears to us as a duty has the final ground of its obligatory force by conforming to not only the concept of our present human nature but also its vocation. (II, 336–337)

When we consider Lotze's views about the highest good we immediately note how it depends upon a definite metaphysics, indeed a Christian worldview. The highest good was nothing less than serenity or blessedness (*Seligkeit*), which was the Christian version of the ancient ideal of tranquility or peace of mind.<sup>39</sup> This serenity came from the perfect correspondence or harmony between virtue and personal happiness. That correspondence could not be achieved in this life, where virtue so often goes begging

<sup>37</sup> See Gustav Theodor Fechner, *Über das höchste Gut* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1846). Lotze endorses his views in his sympathetic review, *Kleine Schriften* II, 273, 279, 280.

<sup>38</sup> See *Grundzüge der praktischen Philosophie* §5.

<sup>39</sup> See *Grundzüge der Religionsphilosophie* §66.

and where vice so often pays, and it could not be accomplished by human agents alone, who do not have the power to refashion the whole cosmos. Rather, it required nothing less than a moral world order with God as its source and guarantee.<sup>40</sup> Kant had provided just such an argument in his second *Kritik*, reasoning that this concept of the highest good requires the belief in the existence of God and the world order. Lotze is indeed indebted to Kant in this respect, as in so many others. His ethics thus endorses Kant's teaching about the highest good, but it rejects his theory about the autonomy of ethics. The net result is to reinstate the dependence of ethics upon metaphysics.

The need for ethics to rest on metaphysics was an important theme of the young Lotze, appearing fully and forcefully in his early reviews of Hartenstein (1845) and Fechner (1847). In his review of Hartenstein Lotze defends Hegel's attempt to provide a metaphysical foundation for ethics against Herbart's radical deontological view, warning us that ethics without metaphysics is in danger of lapsing into mere preaching.<sup>41</sup> And in his review of Fechner he finds the chief fault of Fechner's ethics in its failure to specify the connection between it and his worldview. Lotze's general position is very clear:

If there is any dualism that we must seek to avoid, it is this: to assume first a world of reality, and then thereafter to find scattered within it the valuable; what should be valid as the principle of our action must also be considered as the principle of existence, so that no world exists at all whose forms of existence do not betray its dependence on such a source.<sup>42</sup>

Lotze realized that to make ethics depend upon metaphysics and religion is a risky philosophical strategy.<sup>43</sup> It is to make the foundations of morality depend upon answers to speculative questions, which notoriously admit of no easy or definitive answer. It was for just this reason that he insisted that the voice of conscience provides a sufficient source of moral knowledge in everyday life. There are passages where he seems to concede that there at least *should be* some foundation of morals independent of metaphysics; but it is difficult to conceive what such a foundation would be, because he had rejected the answers of both empiricism (human nature) and rationalism (practical reason alone).

We are now left with a remarkable irony. For Lotze had stressed that the ultimate foundation of metaphysics lies in ethics. It now seems, however, that the ultimate foundation of ethics lies in metaphysics. Lotze's philosophy thus ends in circularity.

<sup>40</sup> See the *Nachlaß* essay, 539, where Lotze explains that to know the connection between morality and happiness it is necessary to see moral obligations as part of the universal order of the world, which does not mean fate but providence, what the highest power requires for us to fulfill his plans for the creation.

<sup>41</sup> *Kleine Schriften* I, 270.

<sup>42</sup> *Kleine Schriften* II, 281.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Grundzüge* §4 and *Nachlaß* essay 539–540.

### 3. Philosophy of History

An integral concern of *Mikrokosmos*, which appears in many chapters of volumes II and III, is the philosophy of history. Lotze had not written about this topic before, though it was one of his earliest interests. From the very beginning he intended to include it in *Mikrokosmos*, since it appeared under two headings in his “*Disposition zur Anthropologie*”, the original outline of the work which he sketched in 1853. The need to add a philosophy of history was indeed a main reason, despite his exhaustion, to continue writing after volume II.

Just why Lotze believed he had to add a philosophy of history is not entirely clear. One suggestive hint comes at the end of volume II of *Mikrokosmos* where he states that knowledge of man’s place in nature, the chief subject of the book so far, does not suffice to explain human development (II, 465). The account he has given of man in volumes I and II has been “only negative”, as he puts it, because it has shown that the power of nature over man is not sufficient to understand him. It is one of the chief mistakes of modern anthropology, Lotze believes, that it thinks it can understand man entirely by determining his place in nature (II, 69, 171). But man is not simply a *natural* being who is the product of the forces of nature acting upon him; he is also an *historical* being who is the result of his interactions with others in society.

Another valuable clue about Lotze’s motivations for writing about history emerges from his *Streitschriften*, which he wrote before the second volume of *Mikrokosmos*. In a revealing passage from his introduction Lotze portrays history as the only remedy for the intolerable abstractness of psychology.<sup>44</sup> If the general task of anthropology is to understand human nature, it cannot achieve this end through psychology alone. For psychology determines only the general laws of human nature as such; and from such laws we learn nothing specific, nothing about how people act in concrete circumstances. We understand human nature only through its actions, through what people have actually done; and the study of such actions is, of course, history. Hence Lotze announces that his anthropology will include, as a necessary complement to psychology, a cultural history of the human race. With that announcement he had committed himself to writing a third volume of *Mikrokosmos*.

What did Lotze mean by the philosophy of history? Not speculation about the general purposes or goals of history, still less an attempt to determine general laws of historical development. These had been the tasks of the philosophy of history for Lotze’s great predecessors, for Lessing, Herder, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. But Lotze could no longer share that conception because he found it much too speculative. The empirical limits he observes in psychology and physiology he imposes upon history too. Like the two great historicists of his age, Ranke and Droysen, Lotze believed that the method of the philosophy of history would have to be empirical, limiting itself to the scanty evidence available about the human past. We cannot say anything about

<sup>44</sup> Lotze, *Streitschriften*, 14–15.

the cosmic significance of human history as a whole, he argues, because our earth is “a small, eccentric and lost point in the infinitude of the whole universe” (III, 18). And from the little we know about the past, we should not venture to make grand speculations about the purpose or plan of history as a whole (III, 19–20, 53). Our own experience is too limited to presume to make judgments about the vast past behind us or the immense future before us. History remains for us a story with an unknown origin and an unknown ending. The philosophy of history would therefore have to be for Lotze a much more modest business than it had been for his predecessors. Rather than metaphysical speculation about the goals or laws of history, it would have to be instead a form of anthropology, a theory about how human beings develop in history.

It was not only an embargo on metaphysical speculation, however, that made Lotze refuse to formulate general laws of history. Another more compelling and complicated motive was his belief in human freedom itself, and more specifically his view that it is incompatible with determinism. Lotze believes that it is necessary to make a distinction between history and nature, where history is first and foremost a realm of freedom (III, 11, 13). Like Kant, he maintains that the course of nature neither requires nor excludes a realm of freedom, and that it is necessary to postulate such a realm to give a place to human dignity and responsibility (II, 451, 455, 461).<sup>45</sup> Although everything within the natural world is subject to regular laws, and so happens of necessity, what he calls “the sphere of inner life”, the realm of thought, obeys its own laws independent of nature. This inner realm is for Lotze the sacrosanct preserve of human freedom (III, 13). Despite his insistence on placing the realm of thought above the natural world, Lotze insisted that human *actions*, which are the realization of thoughts in the sensible world, are still subject to natural laws (III, 13). Just how the thoughts could be free, while their sensible manifestations in action are not, he does not further explain.

Lotze opposed the attempt to formulate general laws of history, then, partly because of the constraints he placed upon speculation, and partly because of his commitment to human freedom. His opposition was indeed so staunch and resolute that many chapters of *Mikrokosmos* are devoted to the criticism of various theories of history.<sup>46</sup>

One of these theories was the idea of progress, the belief that history is moving inevitably toward greater degrees of perfection and happiness. A legacy of the Enlightenment, this theory was still very widespread in the nineteenth century, championed by thinkers on the right and left alike.

But Lotze was having nothing of it. He found the theory much too speculative, a leap of faith far beyond the evidence. We know much too little about past cultures, he argued, to determine whether there has been a trend toward higher levels of culture,

<sup>45</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that in his *Grundzüge der praktischen Philosophie* §19, Lotze rejects Kant's concept of intelligible freedom on the grounds that he is interested in moral freedom only within temporal life. Arguably, however, Lotze's own solution to the problem of freedom is closer to Kant's than he acknowledges, for he also places thought outside the natural and phenomenal world.

<sup>46</sup> See chapter 4 of Book VI (II, 423–424); chapter 5 of Book VII (III, 179–182); chapter 3 of Book VII (III, 83–84); and chapter 2 of Book VIII (III, 244–282).

happiness and morality (III, 179–80). The decline of some of the great civilizations of the past, such as ancient Greece and Rome, even gives us reason to think that things are getting worse. Although Lotze admits there is some evidence for the progress of the sciences, he warns against extending that optimism to the realm of culture and morality (III, 181). There is a streak of pessimism in Lotze's skepticism, because, though he does not claim things are getting worse, he doubts that they are becoming any better. The problem is that human nature itself will not change, so that there will always be conflict and temptation to violate moral principles (III, 182).

Another target of Lotze's critique is the positivist program, the attempt to construct universal laws of history on the model of the natural sciences. He rejects this program in principle because he does not think that such laws exist in the realm of history. For Lotze, that realm consists in a multitude of unique, unrepeatable events or actions, which it is the task of the historian to know in all their individuality. The historian wants to know only what happened at a specific time and place, not how this case is like others that happen in similar times and places. If the historian were to formulate universal laws, he would soon find that they are too general and vague, so that they will not help us to determine what happens in any individual case; they will apply to particular cases only when we add to them all the specific conditions from which we have abstracted in the first place; and so the laws are not really universal at all (III, 71). While Lotze has no objection in principle against statistical laws, he reminds us that they are of little use in understanding the actual mechanism of events (III, 75–6). They show us only that one factor co-varies with another, but they do not explain how or why they co-vary. Statistical laws suffer the same problem as universal or strict ones: they are so indeterminate that it becomes difficult to apply them to specific cases (79–80). Having made these perfectly sound points about the limits of statistical laws, Lotze then goes on to make the more controversial thesis that statistical laws are incompatible with freedom of the will (73, 77).<sup>47</sup> Although they cannot give precise predictions in any individual case, so that it is indeterminate which precise individuals fall under them, they still lay down a general necessity that a large number of individuals cannot escape.

Lotze is no more inclined to endorse teleological conceptions of historical laws than mechanical or statistical ones. The famous theory of Lessing and Herder that the end of history consists in the education of humanity also comes under severe scrutiny (III, 23–27). The source of the theory he finds in a misplaced metaphor. We can talk meaningfully about the education of the individual, but it is questionable if we can talk about the education of humanity as a whole. Humanity consists only in the individuals who compose it—they are the real subjects of history—and not in some general concept, which is incapable of feeling or learning anything. In any case, even if we were to admit such an hypostasis, there is simply not enough evidence for continuity

<sup>47</sup> Lotze changed his view about this in *Grundzüge der praktischen Philosophie*, §20, where he argues that statistical laws pose no threat to the possibility of human freedom.



in history to assume that it consists in a single learning process (III, 27). What sense does it make to think of humanity educating itself from one epoch to the next when one epoch often knows nothing of its predecessors? The idea is no more applicable *within* a single epoch than *between* many epochs. For if we focus on one epoch alone, it is necessary to admit that the highest level of education is limited to an elite few, so that the vast majority of people, “the masses of the intellectual proletariat”, simply fall outside the realm of history. Last but not least, it is false to think that what one epoch gives to another always consists in its best wisdom, viz., its highest achievements in the arts and sciences; all too often what is handed down from one generation to the next is only prejudice, superstition and illusion.

Most of Lotze’s critical energies against the philosophy of history are focused on Hegel, on whom he devotes an entire subsection of chapter two of Book VII.<sup>48</sup> Though Hegel’s influence had declined considerably by the 1860s, his philosophy of history still cast a long shadow. While some (viz., Ranke, Droysen and Humboldt) saw it as the paradigm of how *not* to do the philosophy of history, as the *non plus ultra* of speculative excess, many on the left remained under its spell. For Hegel had expressed the liberals’ dwindling but still lingering hopes that, despite the failure of the Revolution, there could still be progress and a rational future after all. Lotze was probably referring to the last believers on the left when he complained about how many still clung to the theory, and about how difficult it is to eradicate vague conceptions mixed with noble sentiments (III, 36). The fundamental problem with Hegel’s philosophy of history, Lotze claims, is that Hegel cannot specify the precise relationship between the idea in general and its particular manifestations (III, 32). Hegel intends the idea to be absolute, to be everywhere within history, so that nothing falls outside its embrace. Yet it becomes impossible to specify where and how it appears in particular cases. What, precisely, is this idea, this spirit, that Hegel makes into the motor and subject of history? It cannot be the idea of humanity in general, because this is too abstract, having no force over particular individuals. If, however, it is some entity in its own right, a supersensible subject over and above the individuals in which it manifests itself, then it becomes the agent of an alien fate for whom all individuals are only its pawns and instruments (III, 38–40). The crucial question for Lotze is *to whom*, or *for whom*, the idea appears (III, 38). Who is it that grasps the sense and meaning of history? It cannot be just philosophers, as if the whole drama of world history were undertaken for the enlightenment of a few intellectuals (III, 41). It also cannot be humanity in general, for people in mass, who are rarely aware of their general vocation and who seldom rise to self-awareness of their place in history as a whole. Why not just say that these actors are *not* aware of the ends of history, that they are its unwitting instruments? Is that not the thrust of Hegel’s notorious idea of “the cunning of reason”? But Lotze finds it implausible to think that the purpose of history could *not* be known by the actors who

<sup>48</sup> *Mikrokosmos* III, 31–45. True to his intention to avoid polemics, Lotze never mentions Hegel by name, though there cannot be any question that he is his target.

are the means and agents of its realization. On Hegel's own principles, what is merely "in itself" must become "for itself" or self-conscious, so that there must be some places in which agents become aware of the ends they strive to realize. The proper Hegelian answer to the question, Lotze says, is that the meaning of history appears to the absolute spirit alone, so that the whole drama of the past is undertaken for the sake of *its* self-awareness. But this view he finds utterly repellent, chiefly because it undermines all motivation for human action (III, 41). For why should someone strive to improve the world if ultimately all that he or she undertakes is done for the sake of absolute spirit?

Apart from the question of historical laws, Lotze pondered other issues in the philosophy of history in *Mikrokosmos*. One issue that he reflects upon repeatedly, one that clearly troubles him, is whether history, in the sense of mankind's struggle toward civilization, has been worthwhile.<sup>49</sup> Might it not have been better if mankind never emerged from the state of nature? Well into the nineteenth century, Rousseau's old thesis—that the arts and sciences had corrupted morals and increased misery—had lost none of its power to trouble and provoke. Regarding this issue, Lotze reaffirmed the idealist heritage, taking a firm stand in behalf of the value of culture. Much like Kant, Fichte and Hegel before him, he argued that we develop our characteristic human powers only in and through culture, only in and through struggling to create things and in competing with others (II, 359, 422; III, 112, 248). So while nature wills harmony and tranquility, culture knows what is better for us: it wills discord and stress. Primitivism, the desire to return to some primal simplicity and oneness with nature, arises from an understandable attempt to escape the toils and troubles of modern life. But we cannot surrender to it entirely or take it too seriously, if only because we project our own civilized values back into the state of nature. We imagine the state of nature as filled with aesthetic pleasures, though the receptivity for those pleasures is something we develop only within culture (II, 359). We should admit that we have grown so accustomed to the pleasures of civilization that we would find it difficult to return to the primitive state of the primal past. The kinds of pleasures that nature alone, without the refined sensibility of culture, would afford us would be simply physical, and these would not satisfy us for long (II, 423). It is indeed only the higher ideals of culture—be they moral, religious, aesthetic or intellectual—that give value and meaning to our existence (III, 249). Lotze is also not sympathetic to the idea of natural goodness, a fundamental premise behind Rousseau's thesis. He denies that human beings have a natural disposition to morality, and insists that our moral character is the result of an education into culture (II, 393). A primitive people might have moral feelings now and then—the odd flash of sympathy—but they are on the whole inconstant and inconsistent in their moral behavior.

<sup>49</sup> Lotze discusses this question in several places: chapter 1 of Book VI (II, 359–361; chapter 4 of Book VI (II, 421–423, 438–440); chapter 4 of Book VII (III, 112); and chapter 2 of Book VIII (III, 247–249).

All these were standard points against Rousseau. However, Lotze did not simply repeat the old idealist arguments against him. For, unlike the idealists, he was no optimist about the direction of modern life. He had no faith that the increasing growth of the arts and sciences would bring proportionate benefits to mankind. There was something to Jean Jacques' laments after all. For the idealists had failed to take into account one fundamental phenomenon: the troubling consequences of the modern economy, the introduction of modern forms of production and exchange. These consequences had been the inevitable result of the growth in science and technology, and they had to be considered in any final reckoning about the ultimate value of culture. Whenever Lotze contemplated these consequences, he was brought close to a kind of cultural pessimism all his own, one that would vie with Rousseau's. Some passages of *Mikrokosmos* indeed read like Marx's 1844 manuscripts or Schiller's *Aesthetische Briefe*.<sup>50</sup> The power over nature that we acquire with modern technology is problematic, he argues in a fitting Rousseauian manner, because it not only satisfies our needs but increases them, and indeed beyond the point where we can satisfy them (III, 247, 280). All modern life has become a mere struggle for existence, where masses of people are compelled to work under demeaning conditions to earn the mere means for subsistence (III, 280). The division of labour has condemned people to performing rote tasks, and it has made them a mere appendage to the machine (III, 272). Work has ceased to be rewarding in itself, and it has become instead a mere business, a means to earn a livelihood (III, 273, 280). Unlike the ancient and medieval craftsman, the worker ceases to take pride and pleasure in the products of his work, and his only virtue is the mechanical one of punctuality, doing the right thing at the right time (III, 273). Like Weber, Lotze feared and deplored the growing mechanization of modern life. There was a fundamental divide in modern culture between work and leisure, where work was a mere means to subsistence, and where leisure consisted only in amusement and entertainment. There were no public festivals, no ceremonies, no rituals, nothing to give life a sense of mystery or magic (III, 279). After his litany about all the evils of modern culture, Lotze admits, almost with embarrassment, that he has been perhaps a bit softhearted. Yet he still insists that these evils teach an important lesson: that history does not consist in the continual progress and growing perfection that so many claim for it (III, 281).

The troubling consequences of modern forms of production and exchange inevitably raised the question of what could or should be done about them. But any answer to that question made it necessary to enter into the fraught world of politics. Lotze did not hesitate to take that step, as we shall now see.

<sup>50</sup> See especially *Mikrokosmos*, chapter 2 of Book VIII (III, 245–249, 263–280), and chapter 4 of Book VI (II, 424, 438–439)

#### 4. Political Thought

Though Lotze had failed to pay sufficient attention to ethics, the same cannot be said for politics. No one could escape political questions in Germany in the 1830s and 1840s—decades of tumultuous revolution—and Lotze was no exception. Though he lived in seclusion in Göttingen, and though he scarcely took part in political affairs, he still kept a vital interest in politics. Indeed, it would sometimes obsess him to the point that he could not work.<sup>51</sup>

Such, indeed, was Lotze's interest in politics that the longest chapter of *Mikrokosmos*, chapter 5 of Book VIII, "Das öffentliche Leben und die Gesellschaft", is devoted to the subject. Comprising seventy-five pages in the fourth edition, this chapter treats the development of the concept of the state from ancient times down to the present; its meditations upon that development contain the rudiments of an entire political philosophy. Reflections on politics also appear in the final three chapters of *Grundzüge der praktischen Philosophie*, which treats politics in much more detail than ethics. Together, these two texts provide a clear outline of Lotze's political thought.

Hegel's famous dictum that philosophy is the self-awareness of its own age, though perhaps questionable for *all* branches of philosophy, is surely true of *political* philosophy. Lotze's political philosophy is no exception. It reflects his basic political values and beliefs, which were very much those of a conservative liberal in late nineteenth-century Germany. Like everyone born in the early part of that century, Lotze's political views were formed in the vortex of the Revolution of 1848 and its aftermath. We know from his correspondence how much the events of March 1848 preoccupied him.<sup>52</sup>

In the broad spectrum of political opinion that arose in response to the Revolution, Lotze occupies a position to the right of the liberal centre. There can be no doubt about his basic liberal principles: he believed in national self-determination, basic human rights, the need for a market economy, and the preeminent value of personal freedom. Though, like almost all intellectuals in Germany, he deplored the destruction of historical institutions by the French Revolution, he recognized that the political life of his age had been formed by this event, and that there could be no going back to the aristocracy and absolute monarchy of the eighteenth century. Lotze would have had no sympathy with the reactionary ideas of Haller and Stahl, who were eager to restore the old monarchy and divine right doctrine.<sup>53</sup> Still, like all conservative liberals, Lotze feared that the legacy of the Revolution could be taken too far, and that it was necessary to contain the more radical tendencies stemming from it. Constitutionalism was

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Lotze to Hirzel, June 10, 1851, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 211; and Lotze to Hirzel, December 22, 1863, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 425.

<sup>52</sup> See the letters assembled in Falckenstein, *Lotze*, 31–35.

<sup>53</sup> On Haller and Stahl, see James Sheehan, *German History 1770–1815*, 591–596. Lotze knew these writers, but we know little about his reaction to them. Apparently, he intended to write a review of one of Stahl's books, though nothing ever came of it. See Hermann Ulrici to Lotze, June 19, 1852, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 224.

fine; but republicanism was an abomination. Equality of opportunity was admirable; but equality of goods contemptible. Limited democracy was acceptable; but complete democracy, i.e., universal manhood suffrage, was a recipe for ochlocracy. Lotze's conservative affiliation, his distance from the political left, is most apparent from his harsh reaction against socialism, which we will consider below.

Lotze himself would have bristled at being placed in any political group. Amid the political extremes of his age he saw himself as a man of moderation and reason, standing neither on the right nor left and above all party affiliations.<sup>54</sup> Neither reactionary nor radical would he be, but a reformer who stood for the wisdom of gradually improving existing institutions. If it was imprudent to cling to the past when it was filled with abuses and injustices, it was no less foolish to attempt to rebuild the state according to the ideals of the present. Political reform, Lotze preached, should respect and build upon the traditions of the past. The state is not simply a contract among members of the present generation for the promotion of their self-interest, but an historical trust whose task is to pass on the legacy of the past for future generations. Working within this historical continuum, Lotze believed, was essential to our very humanity. A generation that destroyed the past for the sake of its own interests, without any regard for the future, would degrade itself to the level of animals (II, 445).

Yet there was a gap between Lotze's self-conception and reality. As much as he liked to portray himself as the man of the moderate centre, there could be little doubt that his own bias was toward the right. For he shared many—indeed, for his self-conception, too many—beliefs of the more conservative liberals. Thus he advocated a very limited franchise which would exclude the working classes; he championed the old corporations rather than assemblies as centers of political representation; he did not envisage extensive state intervention in the economy to redress “the social question”; and he still endorsed on historical grounds a state religion, refusing to accept a complete separation of church and state.<sup>55</sup> Last but not least, he had little faith in the attempt to create a new constitution for Germany. All the efforts of the assembly at Frankfurt to write a new constitution—no matter how conservative its provisions—were for him in vain.

Just why Lotze was so conservative is not easy to understand. His social background, rooted in middle-class poverty, would seem to have made him a malcontent, a man eager for change. But Lotze very much identified with the cultural and political order that recognized his talents and gave him his extraordinary success, and he very much feared that it could be destroyed by the mass movements of his day.

The starting point for Lotze's political theory is the distinction between the ancient and modern state (III, 391–404). According to Lotze's account of this distinction, the ancient Greek states of Athens and Sparta had authority over all spheres of society,

<sup>54</sup> See his statements in chapter 4, Book VI, of *Mikrokosmos*, II, 444–445, and in *Grundzüge der praktischen Philosophie* §§71, 76.

<sup>55</sup> See *Grundzüge der praktischen Philosophie*, §76.

such as education, morality and religion, so that there was little difference between society and state. The purpose of the state was to direct each individual toward the good life, and the state demanded the full participation of each individual in public affairs. Although the individual had rights *within* the state as a citizen, he had no rights *against* it in the form of private liberties. The modern state, however, had limited jurisdiction over education, morality and religion, so that it stood apart from society as a whole. Rather than attempting to lead each individual toward the good life, it protected the freedom of the individual to pursue happiness on his or her own. The state did not demand full participation in its affairs, because its essential task was only to protect the rights and freedoms of individuals.

All of Lotze's basic political values follow from his preference for the modern over the ancient state. There was in Lotze's case "no elegy for Hellas", no longing for a return to the ancient Greek *polis*. What had inspired Rousseau and Hegel, Schlegel and Hölderlin, had only troubled him. Indeed, he traced many of the problems of modern political life back to their Greek roots. What was wrong with the Greek idea of the state? For one thing, there was the excessive value that it placed on democracy, which led to social instability and ochlocracy (III, 396). For another thing, there was its lack of respect for individual freedoms, the fact that the state made the individual follow its religion, laws and customs even when the citizen disagreed with them (III, 392, 402). But the most dangerous Greek precedent of them all came with the belief that the state is founded on convention rather than nature, that it is a construction of human beings for their own ends (III, 398). Such a belief ultimately undermined the authority of the state, for if the state is based on convention rather than nature, why not just make other conventions? This error, Lotze was convinced, never really disappeared from modern political life (III, 398). It is still prevalent today, he lamented, in the assumption that the state is founded on a contract between individuals, a contract that can be abrogated whenever the people change their will. In other words, the basic failure of the ancient Greeks is that they did not recognize the objectivity of values. What is right, like what is true, is valid in itself, whether we accept it or not; in other words, right has to be recognized, it cannot be created (III, 398). Once we see the objectivity of values, Lotze believed, we learn to respect institutions more. Rather than attempting to abolish them whenever we dissent, we recognize that they hold at least some aspect of right (III, 399).

Following his preference for the modern state, Lotze believed that the sphere of society should be broader than the state, that it should include many autonomous organizations, such as the church, corporations and learned societies. The concept of society should indeed *precede* the state, because the purpose of the state is to protect the interests of people in society. Rather than the state determining the shape of society, the state should be only "the final fixed form of society", reflecting its dominant values.<sup>56</sup> Behind this insistence on the primacy of society over the state lay Lotze's

<sup>56</sup> ee *Grundzüge der praktischen Philosophie*, §42.

nationalism. He argued that the modern state should be based upon the nation, upon the common language, customs and culture of a people (III, 439–442). A state that did not stem from the spirit of a nation would be only a dead bureaucracy weighing heavily on the soul of a people (III, 449–450). What Lotze deplored most, however, was “the cult of the state”, “the divinization of the state” which would give it complete control over all aspects of society (III, 449).

The fundamental value behind the modern state, which Lotze fully endorses, is the freedom of the individual (III, 400). He thinks that this value came into the world through Christianity, which saw each person as having a unique, sacrosanct soul. This value is the basis of the common modern belief, which Lotze also affirms, that each individual is the possessor of certain basic rights (III, 412, 428). Lotze hesitates to call these rights “natural”, because nature gives us only powers, and because rights are dependent upon some social context of duties. Nevertheless, he thinks that each individual has rights whose validity is independent of the state, and which it is the purpose of the state to protect (III, 413; §61).<sup>57</sup> These rights are not bestowed by political authority but they have to be recognized by it (III, 413, 427). In his *Grundzüge* Lotze went on to specify some of these rights (§§33–36). They included the right to existence, to own property, to freedom of mind and body in the conduct of life. These rights are the basis of all legitimate social organization, and each individual agrees to limit his rights for others only if others limit their rights for him (III, 432–433; §41).

Although Lotze sharply distinguishes the modern and ancient states, he still thinks that, in some respects, the modern state has ancient foundations. It is striking, however, that he finds these foundations not in Greece but in Rome. In *Mikrokosmos* he argues at length for the revaluation of the ancient Romans, whose beliefs and practices are said to have had a much greater influence on us than the Greeks (III, 406). The modern conception of political rights came from Rome, Lotze contends, because the Roman citizen, as a property owner and head of the family, had a strong sense of his personal and individual rights, in virtue of which he could make claims against the state (III, 409). The modern system of law also has an enormous debt to Roman law, which has enshrined the idea that rights are to be recognized rather than bestowed (III, 412). In Lotze’s respect for Roman law we can see once again his affiliation with the romantics. For the romantics had admired Roman law, partly because it represented historical continuity, and partly because some of its provisions protected ancient liberties against the arbitrariness of princes.<sup>58</sup>

Lotze’s admiration for Roman law was also telling proof of his conservatism. While discussing Roman law in *Mikrokosmos* he praises its wisdom for proceeding on a case-by-case basis, and for refusing to deduce laws from higher principles (III, 408). That

<sup>57</sup> In what follows references to *Grundzüge der praktischen Philosophie* are indicated by the paragraph number “§”.

<sup>58</sup> On the importance of Roman law for the romantics, see James Whitman, *The Legacy of Roman Law in the German Romantic Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

was in effect to take Savigny's side in his famous dispute with Thibaut, the so-called *Kodifikationsstreit*, which had begun in 1814.<sup>59</sup> Thibaut had argued that Germany stood in desperate need of a new written constitution, that such a constitution should be based on easily comprehensible general principles, which can be known by reason alone. Savigny countered that Germany had no need of a new written constitution, that its old system of Roman law, which embodied the wisdom of generations, functioned perfectly well for all administrative and legal purposes. The law was not based upon pure reason, Savigny believed, but the spirit of a nation, its *Volksgeist*, i.e., its entire culture or way of thinking and acting over the generations. While Lotze stopped short of accepting the *Volksgeist* theory, he did believe that constitutions are better when they are historically evolved from experience rather than artificially made according to general principles.

Lotze's conservatism is also evident in his anti-idealism, his contention that it is a mistake to assume that there is such a thing as an ideal constitution, a model to which all actual states should conform (§§42, 61). This assumption is dangerous, he argues, because it justifies all those reckless attempts to remodel society according to some abstract plan. We must beware of stepping beyond the limits of our own age, and thinking that the state that suits us should suit all peoples in all times and places. "What one regards as an *ideal* or *absolute* state", he dictated in his *Grundzüge*, "is merely that form whose correct expression would be *our* civilization..." (§42). Accordingly, in his account of the standard forms of the state—viz., democracy, aristocracy and monarchy—Lotze refused to commend one form rather than the other (§70). He seems to accept as an historical necessity that the modern European state will be partly democratic, partly a constitutional monarchy. Pure aristocracy and monarchy are for him antiquated forms of government no longer appropriate for the modern age (§§45, 70).

While Lotze questioned the very concept of an ideal state, he insisted that it is still possible to prefer some forms of government over others (III, 444). That form of government is best for a nation that most suits its circumstances and history. The best form of government for modern Europe, because of its history, is an hereditary monarchy, though not the absolute monarchy of the *ancien régime* but a constitutional monarchy providing guarantees for the rights of its subjects (III, 444–445; §70). The great value of an hereditary monarchy, we are told, is that it unites all social classes behind a symbol for the whole nation. This seemed to be all the more valuable in an age of growing class differences, of increasing antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat.

The flip side of Lotze's preference for hereditary monarchy was his aversion to republicanism. While he accepted it as a *fait accompli* that the modern state would be democratic to some degree, he was extremely wary of complete democracy. His suspicion came from his fear of ochlocracy, a fear that seemed all the more justified

<sup>59</sup> For a short account of this controversy, see Hans Hattenhauer's introduction to *Thibaut und Savigny: Ihre programmatischen Schriften*, second edition (Munich: Vahlen, 2002), 1–33. See also my *The German Historicist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 233–245.



with the growing power of the working classes. We find in his *Grundzüge*, therefore, a whole battery of arguments against complete democracy: that it leads to social instability; that it represents the low passions of the mob; that it is unrealistic because governments never extend the franchise to woman and children and seldom to foreigners and the poor (§70). We should restrict the franchise solely to mature males having independent means because they have most at stake in the state. The right to vote should never be simply given, but it should be earned; and to earn it, one should be able to demonstrate some means of contributing to the public good (§72). Rather than enfranchising the masses, Lotze believes that voting should be channeled through trade groups, guilds or local corporations, whose leaders will be able to reflect and restrain the interests of their members (§72).

Lotze formulated his ideas about society and state not only in opposition against the classical state of antiquity but also against a much more modern doctrine: socialism. In chapter VI of his *Grundzüge*, "Von der Gesellschaft", he delivered a harsh critique against it. The critique verges on diatribe, and there enters into it an element rarely found in Lotze's writings: bile. The severity of Lotze's reaction against socialism was a measure of how much he felt threatened by it. He had devoted all his life and labors to the life of the mind and higher culture, to educating the youth and to improving standards in the university; but now all that seemed to be endangered by the leveling ambitions of socialism. His first reaction to the events of March 1848 was telling: he wondered whether there now would be "a University of Göttingen other than in name".<sup>60</sup> Such was Lotze's fear of socialism that, in an passage from his 1880 lectures, he hinted that society is perfectly in its rights to protect, "with all force necessary and with no mercy (*ohne alle Nachsicht*)", the achievements of culture against the unrealistic claims to reform it in the name of greater equality (§47). Behind these obscure lines lay a defense of oppression against socialist agitation.

It is not that Lotze refused to recognize the evils socialism attempted to address: growing class conflict and the impoverishment of the working classes. In his 1880 lectures he stressed that society had a *moral* obligation to address gross inequalities, and that it had a *legal* obligation to remove those institutions that had perpetuated them (§47). But he could not accept the socialist solution to these problems: the creation of a state that owns the means of production, that determines the conditions of work and distributes wealth equally. Whatever moral arguments might be made in behalf of such a state, Lotze finds it utterly unworkable in the real world. The chief obstacle to realizing such a state is nothing less than human nature itself (§52). We know from experience that the chief motive for human labor is selfish, that people want to work for themselves and to enjoy the fruits of their own labors; they cannot be inspired to work for an impersonal state, however devoted it might be to the common good. The socialists and communists are calling for an ideal for which human

<sup>60</sup> See Lotze to Hirzel, March 16, 1848, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 197.

nature is simply not fit: "All ideals of a social order, from the Platonic state down to the present, are completely useless if they merely assert what would be beautiful to exist, and when they cannot prove that there are human beings to perform the roles these ideals prescribe for them" (§52). It was on these grounds that Lotze advised against socialist proposals to abolish laws of inheritance (§51). Abolishing such laws would restrict the motivation to create wealth and to produce a lasting legacy for one's children, and it would encourage people to consume everything in the present in a reckless and selfish way.

Not the least reason for Lotze's resistance to socialism was his fear of "statism", the overwhelming powers it granted to the state. If the state were to take on all the powers that socialism required, it would engulf most of society, so that not only the economy but also education and leisure would fall under its control. To regulate all the aspects of the economy and education would require an enormous bureaucracy that would stifle all local autonomy and individual initiative. In the 1880 lectures Lotze asks his listeners to imagine all the dreadful consequences of creating a socialist state: every individual would work less; the quality of their work would decline; only those trades and vocations would survive that could prove themselves useful to the state; the standards of education would fall; the degree of enjoyment of life would sink because only certain pleasures could be afforded; and so on (§53).

No less a nightmare for Lotze was the socialist ideal of equality. If the ideal of *economic* equality would reward people regardless of effort or merit, the ideal of *social* equality would result in leveling, bringing everyone down to the level of taste and culture of the proletariat. If, as the socialist preaches, everyone should have the same education and opportunities, they will all develop the same talents and abilities, and to the same degree. Everyone will be equal; but everyone will also be the same. The general good is better served, Lotze argues, not by making everyone alike equally happy but by the interaction between different people having differing abilities and talents (§48). Or, as he put it in a metaphor: the degree of light in society would be more widespread and intense if there were brighter spots mixed with dark ones rather than everyone emitting the same dull glow.

Although he insisted that socialist ideals are unworkable, Lotze warned that their failure should be no excuse for inaction (§54). The problems of poverty and class conflict still remained and they had to be addressed by more realistic means. What should these be? Lotze was short on creative suggestions. He proposes an inheritance tax (§51), though he recognizes that this will not come close to resolving the problem. What the workers want first and foremost, he thinks, is an increase in their wages; but he warns that this is very difficult to achieve. If the entrepreneur were to pay his workers more, he would have to increase the price of his product; and if he does that, his business becomes less competitive. If the entrepreneur manages to increase productivity while holding down costs, he can afford to pay his workers more; but even then the workers have no right to claim it from him because he has a legitimate right to claim the rewards of his own investment (§55).

On the whole, Lotze was pessimistic about “the social question”, i.e., the problem of widespread poverty and unemployment. He saw increasing poverty and class conflict as a necessary consequence of the new methods of production and exchange, and he recognized that there could be no going back to the older and kinder methods of the past (§54). The most promising solution, he believed, is for workers to become shareholders in the business in which they are employed; but even that is no magic solution, he realized, because its success depends on those who manage the business, and they would do so with no prospect of a great reward (§56).

All the issues arising from social and economic inequality arise, Lotze argues, from a conflict between two basic principles: that people should be rewarded according to the value of their labor; and that everyone should have the opportunity to achieve happiness (§57). If the first assigns goods strictly according to merit, the second gives them to people according to their needs. Since these principles are in conflict, it is necessary to choose between them; and it is telling for Lotze’s ultimate political affiliations that he plumps for the former. The problem with the latter, he claims, is that it is simply impractical. There is no reliable and fair means of measuring what a person’s needs are or should be, or how we should compare the different needs of different persons. We cannot simply accept what a person claims his needs to be, because we cannot please the wishes of everyone alike. So, faced with the hard choice between liberal or socialist principles, Lotze had no hesitation in endorsing liberal ones.

## 5. Death in Berlin

In March 1865 the secure and secluded world that Lotze had so carefully constructed around himself suddenly collapsed. After a long illness, Ferdinande, who had been the heart and soul of the family, died. Lotze’s third son, Rudolf, had died in 1865; and his two eldest sons, Konrad and Robert, had already left the family, so that he was left alone to grieve with his youngest son. In the months thereafter he had to confront a new potent enemy: depression. His bleak mood is captured in his January 12, 1876, letter to Hirzel:

I cannot say much about myself. I take each day as it comes; externally, it is tolerable, because a young niece cares for domestic things with great sacrifice and loyalty; but, internally, everything is desolate with little concern on my part for what happens around me. Now, as usual, plagued with lumbago, or the fear of it, I seem like a piece of baggage set aside for winter; only in the Summer do I come alive again; but for now I am only conserving myself. Winter is truly dreadful if one is no longer young.<sup>61</sup>

Lotze’s life would have continued in its lonely and sad routine if it were not for the visit in early April of 1880 of Eduard Zeller, professor of philosophy in Berlin.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Lotze to Hirzel, December 12, 1876, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 611.

<sup>62</sup> On Zeller’s fateful visit, see Richard Falckenberg, “Hermann Lotzes Briefe an Eduard Zeller”, in *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 113 (1898), 180–190.

Travelling back to the Prussian capital from a vacation in Wiesbaden, Zeller decided to make a stop in Göttingen to visit Lotze. Though the ostensible reason for his visit was purely friendly, Zeller had a secret agenda: he wanted to sound out Lotze, to see if he might still be interested in coming to Berlin. He informed Lotze that a position would soon become available and asked him for recommendations. To test the waters he then insinuated: “You would of course not come even if it were desired.” To his surprise, Lotze answered that he would not draw that conclusion, and that, though he rejected the earlier offer, he might now act differently.<sup>63</sup>

It is not difficult to understand Lotze’s change of attitude. Now that his wife was dead and his eldest sons had left home, Göttingen was no longer the domestic idyll it once was. The earlier seclusion he once treasured had trapped him in a pit of loneliness. Now, perhaps, by going to Berlin he would gain new energy and momentum? It was a risk at the ripe age of 63, but perhaps it would give him the new energy he needed? After all, the alternative was slow and steady decline in the gloom of Göttingen.<sup>64</sup>

Zeller went back to Berlin with the exciting news that Lotze might well be gained for the vacant position there. His news was met with surprise and enthusiasm. Only a few weeks later, May 14, the faculty decided unanimously to recommend Lotze for the position,<sup>65</sup> and the Minister of Culture approved the request only a few weeks thereafter.<sup>66</sup> Still, it would take time for an official letter to arrive, because Lotze’s salary would have to be larger than normal, and that required the permission of the treasury.

Though Lotze had strong reasons for leaving Göttingen, he confessed to Zeller that the prospect of a forthcoming call to Berlin filled him with dread.<sup>67</sup> There were still the strong ties to Göttingen after decades of living there. And would he be able to meet the great expectations placed upon him? What would life be like in Berlin, a city that he had never seen? Zeller did his best to assuage these doubts.<sup>68</sup> Now in the prime of his life, Zeller reassured him, he could finally have the influence he deserved. Of course, life in Berlin could be noisy and unhealthy at times; but here one was in the center of things, and here one could experience everything firsthand. There was also so much to do, and so many people for colleagues and friends, that one could create one’s own world, much more so than in any small town. Others who came to Berlin late in life found it hard at first, but soon they adjusted and now they were very happy there.

<sup>63</sup> Richard Falckenberg, “Hermann Lotzes Briefe an Eduard Zeller”, 181.

<sup>64</sup> See Lotze’s explanation of his decision to go to Berlin in his November 17, 1880, letter to Hirzel, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 691.

<sup>65</sup> “Philosophische Fakultät an Robert von Puttkammer”, May 15, 1880, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 675.

<sup>66</sup> See Zeller to Lotze, May 31, 1880, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 674–675.

<sup>67</sup> Lotze to Eduard Zeller, May 20, 1880, *ibid.*, 674–675; and Lotze to Eduard Zeller, June 2, 1880, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 677.

<sup>68</sup> Zeller to Lotze, June 2, 1880, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 678–679.

Zeller's powers of persuasion, and the loneliness in Göttingen, were enough for Lotze to make his fateful decision. In August 1880 he wrote Heinrich Göppert, presiding counsellor of the Prussian Cultural Ministry, that, if called, he would come to Berlin.<sup>69</sup> It was only a matter of the Financial Ministry approving his salary. When that approval finally came in late October 1880, Lotze received the call from Berlin as if it were the command of fate. Thus he wrote Göppert:

My sincere thanks for your kind letter, in which you inform me of the decision regarding my fate. I will have to leave it to the future whether it has been a lucky star that has lighted my way to Berlin; I will do my best to justify the trust placed in me; may the moment never come when the University of Berlin regrets having called me.<sup>70</sup>

In December 1880 Lotze travelled to Berlin, for the first time in his life, to seek out his new living quarters there. After several false leads, he eventually found a flat in *Hafenplatz* 9, which was on the first floor, close to the university, with a view of greenery.<sup>71</sup> Lotze moved to Berlin in April 1881, and seemed happy in his new dwellings there. He began his lectures at the university in the Spring Semester. The attendance was very flattering: 67 for metaphysics and 185 for psychology, higher numbers than he ever had in Leipzig or Göttingen. The recognition that he had always sought in the lecture hall had now come to him. The star that led him to Berlin seemed to shine brightly.

For the *Pfingsten* holidays Lotze decided to return to Göttingen. He still kept his house there and he still needed to tend his garden. But the unusually dreary weather gave him a cold. The journey back to Berlin in an unheated train carriage made the cold even worse. Lotze was feeling so unwell that he had to cancel his lectures. A lung infection developed and quickly worsened. On July 1, 1881, he was gone. He was laid to rest in Göttingen in the *Albanifriedhof* next to Ferdinande.

<sup>69</sup> Lotze to Heinrich Göppert, August 30, 1880, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 683.

<sup>70</sup> Lotze to Göppert, October 29, 1880, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 687.

<sup>71</sup> Lotze to Jacob Freudenthal, February 2, 1881, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 707.

# Epilogue

## Closing Evaluation

Lotze's death was untimely and tragic, for both personal and philosophical reasons. Personally, Lotze was at the height of his powers, and he never lived to enjoy his success, which was so well deserved, and the result of such prodigious labor and sacrifice. Philosophically, he never lived to write volume III of his *System der Philosophie*, which would have elaborated his theory of value. The hints and clues about that theory, which appear in *Mikrokosmos* and the first part of the *System*, proved to be the most influential part of his philosophy. Lotze's legacy would have been much clearer, and his importance far less obscure, if he had lived to work out the details of that theory.

Yet, from another perspective, his death was timely and fitting. For Lotze was the last great representative of German Romanticism, a tradition which had reached its zenith generations ago. All great intellectual and cultural traditions deserve their Nestors who will sing their praises long after their creative impulses and energies have run their course. But after Nestor has sung his song, he too must leave the stage to make room for new creative forces.

When, with the benefit of hindsight, we look back upon Lotze's philosophical development, all the struggles behind it and the aspirations that motivated it, we cannot help but ask the question whether it had all been worthwhile. If we measure the worth of his philosophy in terms of its consequences, i.e., its influence upon contemporaries and successors, there cannot be any doubt about its great value. Although Lotze had no immediate followers, although no one came forward to represent and defend his system, many of his ideas proved suggestive and fruitful for many who came after him. His writings were like an old treasure chest discovered in an attic, from which every child could take away some prize. In his masterly *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* John Passmore rightly summarized Lotze's fate and fortune when he wrote: "Few philosophers have been so pillaged...yet in a sense he had no disciples."<sup>1</sup>

If, however, we measure the value of Lotze's philosophy according to his own intentions, it is hard to be so positive about its success. Lotze's guiding goal, the chief aim of his whole authorship, was to do for the nineteenth century what Kant had attempted to do for the eighteenth: to limit reason to make room for faith. But in this respect Lotze was not so successful. His attempt to save morality secured only belief in the *possibility* of freedom; and his effort to rescue religion ended with little more than his personal credo, his belief that the entire universe in all its dimensions (fact, law

<sup>1</sup> John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 53.

and value) is the product of divine love. Where Kant could appeal to the strengths of practical reason to compensate for the weaknesses of theoretical reason, Lotze had no such recourse. He was skeptical of the Kantian categorical imperative; and while he believed in absolute values, he had no means of justifying them on the basis of pleasure alone, which he made into the *ratio cognoscendi* of value. Here, once again, we see the great weakness of Lotze's ethics. Having rested so much on the question of value, Lotze failed to investigate in any depth the foundation of value itself.

Lotze's attempt to resolve the conflict between science and value, much like Trendelenburg's, ultimately rested on his attempt to rehabilitate teleology. What connected the realm of fact with that of value was the idea of a purpose or end. Yet, as we have seen, Lotze had failed to appreciate the challenge of Darwinism to his teleological conception of the world. He argued that naturalistic explanation could apply to anything within the world after its creation, but that it had no power to explain the origin of species or creation itself. But the great challenge of Darwinism was that it did seem to explain the origin of species themselves. The design, order and structure of organic forms seemed to have their beginnings not in design but in mechanism and natural necessity itself. Thus the limits Lotze had posed upon naturalistic explanation were, at least in the case of the origin of species, premature.

Lotze's campaign against naturalism was perhaps more successful in pointing out the distinctive status of meaning and value. The realms of intentionality and normativity are not so easily or obviously explicable according to natural laws. Certainly, the naturalistic psychology of Lotze's own day was not capable of doing justice to these realms. Herbart conceded that his psychology could explain only mental activities but not contents; and Fechner's psychophysics was fixated upon physiological stimulus-response mechanisms. It was the great contribution of Brentano, one of Lotze's students, to make mental content the proper subject matter of psychology.<sup>2</sup> Lotze had opened the door to the realm of intentionality for Brentano, who then attempted to study it from an empirical standpoint. But whether Brentano was ultimately successful in his enterprise, whether intentionality and normativity are indeed irreducible to naturalistic explanation, raise larger questions that we cannot investigate here.

Lotze's struggle against naturalism was limited by the fact that he could not envisage another kind of methodology to investigate the realm of value and meaning.<sup>3</sup> For Lotze, scientific explanation is essentially mechanistic in its goal and structure, involving the subsumption of phenomena under general laws. Since Lotze disputed that value and meaning can be explained by such means, he virtually consigned understanding it to the realm of intuition and art. But in conceiving explanation in such narrow terms Lotze had made an enormous concession to the radical naturalists or

<sup>2</sup> Franz Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* (Leipzig: Duncker, 1874). Brentano sent a copy of his book to Lotze, January 18, 1874, *Briefe und Dokumente*, 595–596. Lotze's reaction to it is unclear.

<sup>3</sup> This point was made long ago by Misch, "Einleitung", xiv, for whom this was one of the main limitations of Lotze's philosophy.

materialists of his age, who were happy to share that premise. Some of Lotze's contemporaries and successors, however, were already questioning that premise and were intent on demonstrating the validity of other forms of explanation. Lotze had little conception of the hermeneutic methods that Boeckh, Droysen and Dilthey were developing to interpret value and meaning.

In an important respect, though, Lotze was well ahead of his contemporaries and successors. For he understood sooner and better than they the fundamental importance of connecting the realms of value and nature, meaning and existence. Lotze never could surrender the goal of providing a single unified conception of the world, a general worldview that could unite all forms of discourse into a meaningful whole. It was never his intention simply to lay down dualisms, to separate the realms of fact, law and value; he saw these dualisms as problematic as they were important; and so he was determined to unite them. The need to bring together these realms was appreciated only much later by Husserl, Windelband and Rickert.

Apart from its consequences and intentions, there is another perspective in which we can measure the value of Lotze's philosophy. This perspective considers its purely formal or aesthetic structure, i.e., whether it is original and forms a consistent and harmonious whole. Viewed from this angle, Lotze's philosophy is near a masterpiece. It was decidedly original, and it was a comprehensive and harmonious whole, uniting all opposites within itself. Idealism and realism, pantheism and theism, mechanism and teleology, rationalism and empiricism, monism and pluralism, all find their place within his system, their strengths preserved and their weaknesses avoided. All this is to say that Lotze's philosophy was a work of art. For someone in the romantic tradition, there could be no higher commendation.



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# Bibliography

## Note on Organization

This Bibliography contains three main parts: 1) General Sources, 2) Primary and Secondary Sources referred to in the discussion of Trendelenburg, and 3) Primary and Secondary Sources referred to in the discussion of Lotze. References are organized separately under each of these parts.

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The chief source on Trendelenburg's life and context is Ernst Bratuscheck's *Adolf Trendelenburg* (Berlin: Henschel, 1873). (Reprint by Adamant Media Corporation in 2003). Bratuscheck was a student of Trendelenburg who had access to many sources which have since been lost. Bratuscheck's work is indispensable and invaluable. According to Peter Petersen (*Philosophie Trendelenburgs*, 12), Bratuscheck's work was "somewhat excessive" (*etwas überschwenglich*) because of its wealth of historical detail. Yet, in historical hindsight, Bratuscheck's judgment has proven entirely correct; his treatment is valuable precisely because of its details, which he wisely judged would be otherwise lost to posterity. There are several other sources on Trendelenburg's life, most of them obituaries or reminiscences of former students: Hermann Bonitz, *Zur Erinnerung an Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg. Vortrag gehalten am Leibniztage 1872 in der königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1872). Bonitz's

article also contains what was for a long time the sole bibliography of Trendelenburg's writings; it has now been surpassed by Köhnke's catalogue, cited above.

Franz Devanter, *Zur Erinnerung an Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg* (Eutin: Struve, 1902). Using as his main source a family scrapbook, Devanter provides some vivid details about Trendelenburg's family and personal life.

Karl von Prantl, *Gedächtnisrede auf Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg* (Munich: Im Verlage der königlichen Akademie, 1873).

Rudolf Eucken, "Zur Erinnerung an Adolf Trendelenburg", *Deutsche Rundschau* 29 (1902), 448–458.

Friedrich Paulsen, "Adolf Trendelenburg. Ein Blatt persönlicher Erinnerung", *Berliner Akademische Wochenschrift*, April 24–29, 1907, 187–189.

The only monograph in English on Trendelenburg's philosophy is Gershon Rosenstock, *F.A. Trendelenburg* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964). Rosenstock's study is very slanted: it is largely focused on Trendelenburg's alleged influence on Dewey, and it therefore reads Trendelenburg anachronistically as a "pioneer of naturalism". Trendelenburg's significance, it seems, amounts to his alleged role as a forerunner of Dewey. Rosenstock's analysis of Trendelenburg's arguments are crude, and he ignores Trendelenburg's ethics, aesthetics and pedagogics. George Sylvester Morris's article on Trendelenburg, "Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg", *The New Englander* 33 (1874), 337–355, is strictly of historical interest because of Morris's role in early American philosophy.

The main German work on Trendelenburg's philosophy has been Peter Petersen's *Die Philosophie Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburgs* (Hamburg: Boysen, 1913). Petersen's study is broader but his analysis of Trendelenburg's philosophy does not get much beyond paraphrase. His criticisms of Trendelenburg are dismissive and bizarrely incoherent. For example, he claims that Trendelenburg has refuted Darwinianism (196) but also rejects his teleological concept of nature, claiming that his philosophy is a relic of the romantic past (183, 184). Besides Petersen's work, there is the article by Rudolf Eucken, "Zur Charakteristik der Philosophie Trendelenburgs", in his *Beiträge zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* (Heidelberg: Friedrich Weiß Verlag, 1886), 118–144. Some of Eucken's judgments on Trendelenburg are very controversial, viz., that he had little appreciation of Kant and modern philosophy (128, 139).

The study of Trendelenburg received new impetus in 1986 with the publication of Klaus Christian Köhnke's *Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986). Though Köhnke devotes only one chapter to Trendelenburg (23–57), he stresses his general historical significance for the emergence of neo-Kantianism. There is an English translation of Köhnke's work: *The Rise of Neo-Kantianism*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), though it unfortunately eliminates the many notes of the German edition. In 2006 Gerald Hartung and Klaus Christian Köhnke published the proceedings of a conference in Eutin, *Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburgs Wirkung* (Eutin: Eutiner Landesbibliothek, 2006) (Eutiner Forschungen Band 10). The proceedings contain many excellent articles as well as an indispensable catalogue of Trendelenburg's works (cited above). The following are the works cited or consulted in Part I of this book.

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